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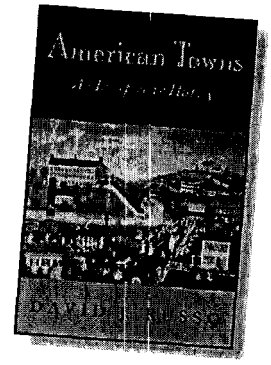

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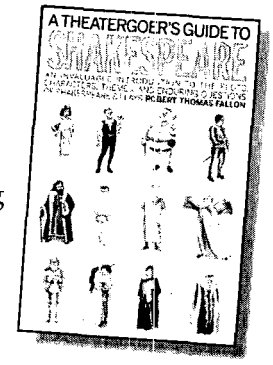

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Editor's Page

AMERICA NEEDS "values." That is the conservative harangue. But to think about values? That's something else. ■ They get away with sanctimony. Do I exaggerate? Return (O return!) to our "Constitution and Absolute Truth," urges Tom DeLay, House Majority Whip. Truth hurts, he told the *Washington Post*. "People hate the messenger. That's why they killed Christ." In DeLay's view, Democrats are "socialists," the Environmental Protection Agency is "the Gestapo of the government," the state should not be separate from religion, but corporations need liberation from the state. DeLay's comrade Attorney General John Ashcroft has Bible-study classes in the Justice Department. What is discussed? I wonder. Is it the prophet Amos, calling for justice? Or a passage about stoning adulterers, umm. . .Democratic adulterers? Perhaps Ashcroft's admirers, especially "creationists," should design our entire curriculum according to "values." Physics 101: the sun stands still for Joshua. An "A" gets you a job planning the national missile defense system. ■ Democratic adulterers don't do everything wrong, not according to our Supreme Court-anointed president. He declared recently that the "war on poverty" is "more effective" thanks to Bill Clinton's 1996 compassionate welfare reform. George W. Bush wants "faith-based organizations" to take more charge of "poverty work," which means, I suppose, more charge of poor people. Presumably this will check adultery and also save them in any recessionary hereafter. If not, there's always belief in the market's Invisible Hand. Some conservatives think it reflects nature (that is, heaven) and thus incarnates values. Others think values lead to The Market, but worry that markets also threaten values. They hope that fear of a Greater Power will secure bourgeois stability. ■ It's not just the Republicans: Senator Joe Lieberman does his bit for the Democrats. It's not just politicians: there are intellectuals, too. Yes, some speak in good, if often imperious, faith. But others believe—as did the late philosopher Leo Strauss, a neoconservative icon—that noble lies are needed to keep common people in place. ■ But democratic citizens, secular and religious, can debate public values—can debate means and ends—intelligently, productively, and together without religious correctness. You don't need to be religiously correct to worry about Bush's willingness "to expand market rights to pollute" (read Ken Conca in this issue of *Dissent*). Or to worry about marketization of universities (read John Palattella's article). Or how market values create a "tourism plantation" in "paradise" (read Gordon Lafer's account of labor struggles in Hawai'i). Or what it means to remake the world entirely on market models (read Terence Ball on "Marketopia"). ■ Our political missionaries want more religion in the "public square." What they resist is open inquiry into their beliefs there; inquiry makes you a foe of "values." But in a democracy, the public square is a domain of intellectual scrutiny, not immunity.

M.C.

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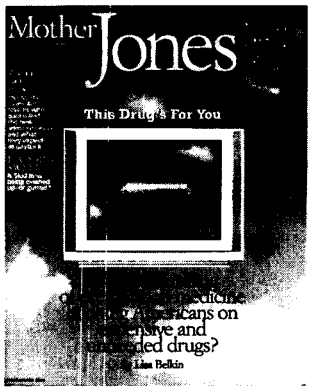

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Missile Defense: A Deadly Danger

James K. Galbraith

THE FILM *Thirteen Days*, which deals with the Cuban missile crisis, reminds us that the danger of global nuclear annihilation does not come, mainly, from irrational adversaries and rogue states. Instead, the main threat stems from the policies and behaviors of those entrusted with the world's largest and most volatile nuclear arsenal—our own.

Since Ronald Reagan announced what was dubbed "Star Wars" in 1983, missile defense has come to dominate the evolution of strategic technologies and strategic thinking. For the leaders of the nuclear establishment, its propaganda value has been immense; it has enabled them to escape the stigma of *Dr. Strangelove* and to portray themselves as guardians of the search for security and survival.

The American debate over missile defense has accepted this self-portrayal—so much so that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld now feels able to describe the pursuit of missile defense as a "moral imperative." Accordingly, the American argument over whether to proceed has come to turn on technical issues. Opponents make the superficially pragmatic argument that decisions to deploy should be delayed until the system can be proven to work. In taking this position, they concede the principle that a working system would be a good thing.

But in fact, missile defenses in all forms are drastically destabilizing, easily defeated, and globally dangerous whether the system works or not. The new administration may be showing technical realism in shifting emphasis from a national ballistic missile shield to the more limited theater missile defense (TMD). But TMD has its own dangers, and a decision to move TMD now does not preclude a decision to move ahead with national missile defense (NMD) later.

Put simply, national missile defense is wrongheaded on four counts.

First, it is a diplomatic disaster. Deployment of NMD requires abrogation of the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty (ABM). The administration claims to regard this treaty as a cold war relic, but it is the foundation of the entire structure of strategic arms control. Without the ABM Treaty, neither Russia nor China can feel secure in their second-strike capabilities, and neither will comfortably adhere to their longstanding restraint in nuclear offensive weapons. Our allies in Europe and elsewhere recognize these dangers, and for this reason they also oppose U.S. NMD.

Second, it is a technological dead end. As defense, national missile defense will not work, for the simple reason that it is easily defeated by decoys and by attacks on the "eyes" of the system. The fact that the technology has not matured after forty years of effort is clear evidence of this fact. It took only six years to go from the discovery of uranium fission to the detonation of an atomic bomb, and only one test to show that the implosion bomb would work. NMD has been tested repeatedly. There is no sign that the fundamental difficulties of making it work under combat conditions can be overcome.

Third, it is a budget sinkhole. NMD is impossibly expensive. Standard estimates of sixty billion dollars for a working system overlook two important facts. First, scores of billions have already been spent on the system, with little to show. Second, all military development programs cost much more than is budgeted for them at the outset. Cost is particularly open-ended for high-urgency programs whose technological difficulties remain unresolved. Such programs are, of course, an invitation to mis-

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representation and fraud; important accusations of this have already been made against NMD.

Finally, it is a strategic threat. The administration claims that NMD is not targeted against Chinese or Russian deterrence, but against the threat of a rogue state or an accidental missile launch. The obvious fallacy is that no "rogue" state would target the United States with a ballistic missile when simpler, cheaper, more effective, less traceable means of delivering a small atomic terror weapon are available, against which missile defenses would be useless. The accidental launch argument, on the other hand, concedes that Russian and Chinese missiles are the real targets. But the risk of accidents could be eliminated by de-alerting Russian missiles (China's are not on high alert now), as well as our own—de-alerting that is only possible without missile defense.

The fact that NMD cannot defend against a first strike again calls attention to the only configuration in which NMD *might* work: as an adjunct to an *American* first strike that destroys most enemy forces (and everything else) on the ground. Following a first strike, a limited missile defense might shoot down a handful of surviving retaliatory missiles. This point is clear to both Russia and China, who long ago concluded that NMD merely extends long-standing American strike-first plans. They will respond, as both have warned, by increasing the numbers of their own missiles, and by placing their forces on a higher alert.

NMD is, in short, an unlimited budget drain aimed at a deeply immoral objective: the nuclear blackmail of other states. It is a highway back to the days when thermonuclear death threatened from one minute to the next.

AT FIRST GLANCE, theater missile defense (TMD) is comparatively appealing. It can be implemented, up to a point, by upgrading existing systems. It can be based on ships and posted to parts of the world where missile threats exist. And it cannot seriously threaten the retaliatory nuclear forces of a great power like Russia or China.

But a closer look raises frightening questions. First, who decides when a missile is hostile? Under TMD, that decision has to rest with a forward commander—the ship's captain, in the naval version. Do we want U.S. navy ships to have authority to shoot down test rockets and weather satellites in the boost phase? Second, who protects the ships? On permanent station near hostile countries, they are vulnerable to missile attack—or for that matter to attack by shore-based jets, patrol boats, or submarines. Third, such attacks are actually invited: how is a state targeted by missile defense to know that the shipboard missiles are in fact interceptors, and not short-range nuclear ship-to-shore weapons? Fourth (and partly for this reason), the ABM treaty forbids a ship-based ballistic missile defense system; no less than NMD, TMD in this form would undermine arms control.

Fifth, there is a glaring logical contradiction in TMD plans. If the rogue state argument for NMD is a ruse, how can it be a valid argument for TMD? And if NMD is really aimed against accidental launch by Russia or China, how can TMD counter this threat? No ship-based or boost-phase system can hope to hit a missile launched from the interior of either country. So what is TMD really about, except once again for blackmail or possibly to build a system for sale to Israel and Taiwan?

The Taiwan issue deserves special attention, for the fact is that both sides of that dispute have displayed creative patience over fifty-two years, during which time strong ties of trade, finance, and personal relationship have built up between them. So long as neither side commits to major military upgrading now, the other need not do so. It makes no sense at all to allow the U.S.-Taiwan military relationship or a desire for arms sales to force the hand of the mainland.

Finally, there is—or will be eventually—proliferation, a military certainty in a multipolar, globalized world. TMD will only come to exist if, with very large investments, we create the technology. But once created, it will be copied, around the world, by emerging nuclear states who are close to each other: India and Pakistan, and perhaps especially Israel, Iran, and Iraq. In each case, countermeasures will follow. The risk is then of proliferating offense-defense arms races, with high likelihood that

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one or more of them will eventually lead to nuclear war.

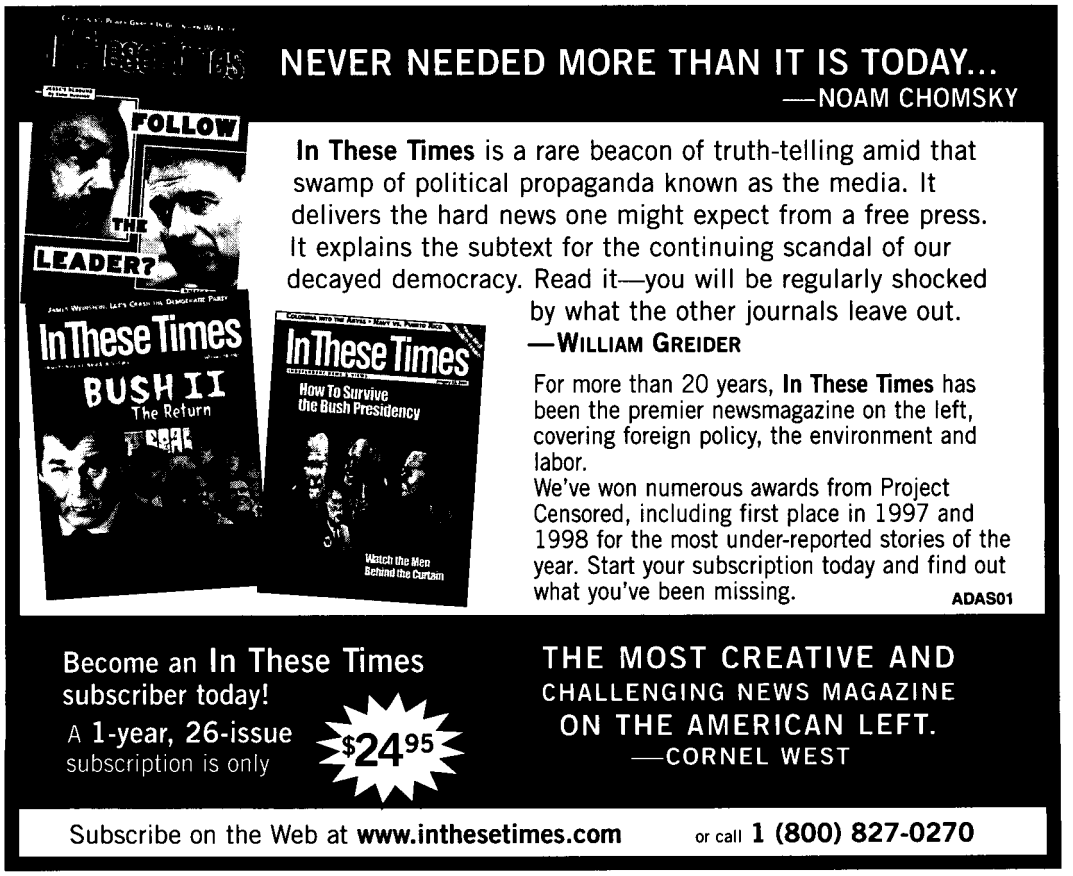
Theater missile defense may be the path of the years just ahead. There is a tendency, here and in Europe, to view this as a face-saving station along the path of retreat from the delusions of NMD. But if TMD develops into a workable system, then many parts of the world will be drawn into the vortex—beginning in all likelihood at the Taiwan Strait. And matters will be worse still if TMD turns out to be a cover for later development of NMD.

In the last analysis, therefore, no form of missile defense can ever substitute for building strategic stability, for resolving conflicts, for de-alerting, and ultimately for disarmament, on which the nuclear future of the world finally depends.

This is, of course, the further lesson of *Thirteen Days*. The great improvements in strategic stability that followed the Cuban crisis did not come from better U-2s, more accurate inter-continental ballistic missiles, or because the Russians "blinked." They came because John Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev opened communication channels, agreed to withdraw forward-based missiles from both Cuba and Turkey, and later banned atmospheric testing. Diplomacy worked when, under the threat of the hydrogen bomb, nothing else could.

Missile defense repudiates diplomacy. It places confidence in men with trigger fingers, and puts hair-trigger systems back onto forward stations. It signals, and reflects, contempt for the interests, concerns, and perspectives of other powers. As such, missile defense in any form threatens the fragile stability of nuclear peace. ●

JAMES K. GALBRAITH chairs Economists Allied for Arms Reduction. This piece is adapted from an essay in the ECAAR newsletter.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The Tax Cut: Worse Than You Think

Mark Levinson

THE RIGHT'S ALLERGY to active government has become the dominant theme in American politics. Bill Clinton's ability as a politician was not to challenge that theme, but to operate within it. So, by 1994, Clinton and the Democratic Congress were reduced to coopting Republican ideas—less regulation, balanced budgets, reduced welfare payments, devolution to the states. By the end of the Clinton years, despite projected budget surpluses of hundreds of billions, no, trillions, of dollars, the most imaginative thing Clinton and Al Gore stood for was paying off the national debt. On most aspects of domestic policy Clinton and Gore were to the right of Richard Nixon.

George W. Bush is not Ronald Reagan. He does not have Reagan's ability to translate ideology into warm sentiments and stirring slogans. He is simply a hard right winger. His first months in office produced a tax bill that will deliver truckloads of cash to millionaires, a bankruptcy bill for bankers, attacks on unions, reductions in public spending that will hurt the poor, environmental betrayals (discarding his campaign pledge to reduce carbon dioxide emissions), a massively flawed missile defense policy, and promises to extend the North American Free Trade Agreement to the rest of the western hemisphere.

Bush's boldness is encouraged by the timidity of many Democrats.* When the smoke cleared after congressional negotiators—including key Democrats who claimed their participation would "make the outcome better"—reached agreement on a tax cut, the outcome was worse than Bush's original proposal. Lawmakers added provisions and juggled the timing of the tax breaks in ways that will increase the cost of the bill and keep accountants gainfully employed for years to come. This nasty piece of work—which the Senate spent less time debating than it did renaming National Airport after Reagan—will make the rich richer and hurt the poor.

How bad is it?** First, the tax cut, which congressional negotiators put at $1.35 trillion—is actually much larger. The $1.35 trillion figure is arrived at only by including artificial sunset provisions that no one expects to be enforced. The real cost is closer to $2 trillion for the first ten years and $4.3 trillion in the next ten years. Second, it is staggeringly regressive. More than a third of the tax cut goes to the richest 1 percent of all taxpayers, more than 70 percent goes to the top 20 percent. The top 1 percent—whose average income is more than one million dollars a year—receives more than the bottom 80 percent of all taxpayers!

TO UNDERSTAND the full impact one also has to look at Bush's spending proposals. All domestic spending areas, except health, will experience cuts ranging from 2.1 percent for education and training to 23.6 percent for natural resources and the environment. These budget cuts will have real impacts on programs: 70,000 fewer Head Start slots, 125,000 fewer students in after-school programs, 60,000 fewer child care slots, 195,000 fewer dislocated workers served, and 125,000 fewer young workers trained.

To put the giveaway to the rich in perspec-

*In 1993, when Clinton proposed to restore some modest progressivity to the federal income tax and raise rates on wealthier taxpayers, *every* Republican voted against it. In contrast, twenty-eight Democrats in the House and twelve in the Senate voted for Bush's tax cut.

**The information that follows comes from various reports published by the valuable troika of progressive think tanks in Washington: the Economic Policy Institute, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and Citizens for Tax Justice.

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tive: millionaires will receive more in tax cuts over the next ten years than the total that would have been provided for all initiatives in education, Medicare, defense, reducing the ranks of the uninsured, and other areas.

It gets worse. Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, in an interview in the *Financial Times*, said he "absolutely" backs the abolition of taxes on corporations. "The clear economic truth is that businesses and corporations don't pay taxes, they just collect them for the government. . . .Because businesses and corporations have to recover all of their costs and earn the cost of capital, after all of their expenses including taxes."

O'Neill's argument, long made by business, is that it is irrational to force corporations to pay taxes, rather than individuals, because corporations just pass on the cost of taxes to consumers. The fact is that corporations retain huge earnings, and they cannot pass all costs on to consumers. The argument that corporate taxes should be eliminated, with taxes coming only from individuals, is—from an administration that just enacted a massive tax cut for individuals—a radical effort to shrink government.

Corporate taxes have already declined. The share of taxes paid by corporations, about 25 percent three decades ago, is down to approximately 10 percent. And a recent study by Citizens for Tax Justice showed that many corporations (including General Electric, Ford, AT&T, Merck, Microsoft, Bristol Myers-Squibb, and Exxon) had negative federal income tax payments—meaning that they received rebate checks from the U.S. Treasury. Given this, it would seem to be politically impossible to cut corporate taxes even further.

But from the corporate point of view it appears that anything is possible these days. Corporations may sense that this could be their last chance. Bush not only received fewer votes than Gore, but if you add Nader's vote, the right was soundly defeated in the last election. Bush's agenda is out of touch with reality. Inequality is rising, and his policies will exacerbate it. The economy is on the brink of recession, the economic stabilizers needed in bad times have been eroded by decades of reductions, and the tax cut is too back loaded to kick

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start the economy. Economic insecurity is rising, and Bush's spending cuts will further shred the already inadequate safety net.

America is falling behind. I do not mean that we are losing ground to the rest of the world. I mean that we are falling behind with respect to our own capacities. We are not the country we could be. Why, despite the longest economic recovery in U.S. history, do so many lack health care, live in poverty? Why don't we have world-class schools? Is it inevitable that our cities strangle in traffic? Why can't all working parents have access to safe day care for their children? Why can't we leave clean air and water for the next generation? There are so many ways several trillion dollars could be spent to make America a better place. Giving it to millionaires is not one of them. ●

MARK LEVINSON is research director at the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE).

The Labor Movement: Is Anybody Home?

Marshall Berman

LABOR MOVEMENTS are remarkable modern institutions. All over the world, they have fought for what Marx called "the political economy of the working class." They have transformed exploited workers into active citizens, and Social Darwinist battlegrounds into civilized and decent places whose members can count on public education, public housing, public health. Hundreds of millions of people who never give unions a thought stand in their debt.

But, although this progress is real, it isn't guaranteed. Half a century ago, Albert Camus rewrote the myth of Sisyphus, whom he portrayed as "proletarian of the gods." This hero rolls an enormous stone up a mountain—participates in grueling but satisfying work that leads to social progress—only to see it roll down again. Anybody close to American labor knows this story all too well. In the long years of George Meany's hegemony, the AFL-CIO lost its collective drive and its care for public welfare. It devolved into a bunch of particularist protection agencies for certified members. Without its civic leadership, America collapsed into the concrete jungle we all know, with thriving sweatshops and penal systems and people sleeping in the streets. (Weep for Michael Harrington, Cassandra of this modern tragedy.)

John Sweeney & Company could seize power because it was clear that workers were politically isolated; the labor movement would have to reach out and organize the rest of American society or it would die. The AFL-CIO's Union Summer project reinvented the occupation of organizer, and thousands of young people are organizing, above all in our ever-growing "human service" industries. Other people are working with on-line workers, many of whom don't know they are workers at all, even after they have been atomized, downsized, outsourced, and re-engineered into the ground. Other people are developing coalitions with environmentalists and trying to give labor a global horizon. That's the point of those thrilling protests against the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. These different strokes attract different folks; but they are all trying to roll that stone uphill once more.

SO WHERE ARE they now? Why has W. gotten such a free ride to the right? When his people hit the ground running, how come nobody hit back? The Democratic Party seems even more clueless in 2001 than it was in 2000. These guys actually won the election, yet they are still shaking as if the Big Unit has

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just struck them out. People all over the country are fed up with W.'s Gilded-Age deference to capital and his cowboy environmentalism, but the party seems to have no idea of how to reach them. A little power—say, control of the Senate—might concentrate their minds. But unlike the GOP, which knows it is the party of the rich, the Democratic Party has a notoriously shaky idea of what it's there for. It can't be trusted to pull itself together unless there is a labor movement pushing it hard left. Yet the AFL-CIO still seems frozen in its futile embrace of Al Gore, as if it gave everything to this man who barely gave labor the time of day, and now it has nothing left.

Maybe it's still in shock. Shock is something that any of us who have ever suffered a hopeless love affair can understand. But all of us who have ever lived through mourning and melancholia should be able to say to the labor movement what our best friends have always said to us: Wake up, already! Show some pride in who you are! You have a past and a future and promises to keep and a life to live. •

MARSHALL BERMAN teaches at the City University of New York and is at work on a book entitled *One Hundred Years of Spectacle, Metamorphoses of Times Square*.

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Cancel the Funeral

Reports of the Death of the European Welfare State Are Premature

Janet C. Gornick

DURING THE PAST two decades, the American media have often reported on the demise of the European welfare state. As the story goes, generous social welfare benefits, in conjunction with excessive labor market regulation, caused Europe's unemployment woes. Having recognized the damage done by overly generous social protection, European policy makers have opted for widespread welfare state retrenchment and labor market deregulation. The subtext of the tale is clear: the United States should take no social policy lessons from Europe; to the contrary, policy makers across Europe are fast adopting the U.S. model of bare-bones social protection. In 1995, in the midst of the recent American "welfare reform," U.S. investment strategist Edward Yardeni (known as the "Wall Street Wizard") announced in *Business Week* that Newt Gingrich was the "Angel of Death for the social welfare state—not only in the U.S., but worldwide."

Vivid reports of the collapsed welfare state emerged during the early Reagan-Bush years and continued through the Clinton era. In 1983, *Business Week* declared that the "great edifice of the European welfare state is beginning to totter like an inverted pyramid." In 1993, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that "nowhere is the dismantling of the social security net more drastic than in Sweden, [although] similar retreats from the expansive days of social democracy are under way in virtually every European Community nation." In 1995, *Business Week* announced that "France... in recent weeks has been in the center of what may well be the last great Continental convulsion in this century, the dismantling of the European welfare state."

These stories about Europe's stressed-out welfare state appear alongside hundreds more that describe the damage that social programs and labor protections have caused the European economies. Seth Ackerman, a media analyst with Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, recently reported in *Harper's* that American news outlets have published six hundred articles since the mid-1980s on the unhealthy effects of European social protection—dubbed "Eurosclerosis" by *Time* magazine. Although it's not clear exactly what drives this anti-European-social-policy drumbeat, Ackerman concluded that increasingly cozy relations between major media companies and American big business are a major culprit. "The 'sick man of Europe' is in truth a straw man of American capitalism," he writes, "a cautionary fairy tale as widely believed by our journalists as it is beloved by the businessmen who sign their checks." What is clear is that these stories gratify those who oppose public solutions to market-generated risks and inequalities; indeed, they justify the U.S. system of stripped-down social policy and minimalist labor protection.

Unpacking the Story

Let's unravel these tales of economic disaster and welfare state retrenchment and sort out fact from fiction. The media accounts usually unfold in three parts. First, we're told, Europe has been wracked by high unemployment since the late 1970s, much worse than we've seen in the United States. Second, high levels of social protection—social welfare benefits combined with employment regulation—have *caused* the high and persistent unemployment rates. Finally, in response to labor market failures, the once generous welfare states of Europe have overturned fundamental elements of social welfare policy. What is the truth in these claims?

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The first part of the argument is the most accurate. Unemployment rates across Europe have exceeded those reported in the U.S. in recent years. Although European jobless rates fell steadily throughout the 1990s, the average unemployment figure for the fifteen European Union (EU) countries, now 8 percent, is still about double the U.S. rate. However, that 8 percent average conceals considerable variation across the countries of Europe. While unemployment remains as high as 16 percent in Spain, some of the more developed welfare states have much lower rates—for example, just over 3 percent in the Netherlands, and in Sweden, 5.6 percent and falling. At the same time, the relatively low rates recorded in the United States incorporate some systematic biases that lead to undercounting. In one often-quoted study, two American researchers, Bruce Western and Katherine Beckett, show that the far higher rates of incarceration in the United States explain a substantial share of the difference between male unemployment in the United States and the European average; in some years, our sky-high imprisonment rates explain the entire difference.

ALTHOUGH THE reports of high and persistent unemployment in Europe may be exaggerated in the U.S. media, it's clearly true that relative demand for labor in the United States has exceeded that in most European countries throughout the last two decades. But what role, if any, Europe's social protection policies have played in pushing up unemployment is not clear. Despite the widespread belief within the United States that social protection has clogged Europe's economic arteries—the "Eurosclerosis" theory—recent research casts doubt on any clear cause-and-effect connection. Several European and U.S. economists find that many welfare state and labor market features that are frequently viewed as hazardous to employment (high payroll taxes, high overall taxes, and high benefit replacement rates) are no less common in high-employment than in low-employment countries. Rebecca Blank and Richard Freeman recently concluded that there is little empirical evidence for large trade-offs between social protection and labor market flexibility; the best attitude toward the trade-off hypothesis, they argue, is one of "open-minded skepticism." Proponents of the Eurosclerosis theory frequently fail to take account of other crucial factors. Nobel laureate Robert Solow and other economists have argued, for example, that persistently high real interest rates run by Europe's central bankers have kept millions of people out of work. Many European economists have pointed to the increased demand for technical skills across industries and occupations—which has rendered many less-skilled workers unemployable—while others have considered the effects of growing competition from low-cost producers in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia.

The third leg of the popular argument, that the European welfare state is being dismantled, is largely wrong. Without a doubt, social welfare systems throughout Europe have faced real political and economic pressures in recent decades. Unemployment challenged the overall economic logic of social protection, and rising numbers of claimants squeezed state financing capacities. Declining birthrates reduced social welfare revenues, while increasing longevity increased expenditures. Economic internationalization, both within and outside Europe, intensified commercial competition, putting economic pressure on both governments and businesses to reduce labor costs by cutting the social wage and slashing labor protection. Conservative governments increased ideological pressure for welfare state cutbacks. For member countries of the European Union and countries anticipating membership, EU requirements added further pressure to reduce public spending in order to keep deficits within stipulated limits. These pressures have in fact pushed both welfare state restructuring and labor market deregulation onto political and policy agendas across Europe. But have the European welfare states been visited by the Angel of Death? Have we actually seen "the last great Continental convulsion in this century, the dismantling of the European welfare state"?

In a word, no. While several European countries have loosened labor market regulations, a growing body of academic research challenges the parallel claim that monumen-

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tal rollbacks in social policy have been enacted. Gosta Esping-Andersen, Europe's leading scholar of the welfare state, recently noted that "popular perceptions notwithstanding, the degree of welfare state roll-back, let alone significant change, has so far been modest." Niels Ploug, another longtime scholar of European social policy, observed last year that within the Nordic countries, which have the most developed welfare states, "cutbacks have been introduced or retrenchment has taken place. This process has involved cuts in benefit levels, tightening of eligibility criteria and shortening of benefit periods. [However,] in general, these cuts have not been radical—some of them can even be seen as symbolic." Paul Pierson, an American political scientist who's tracked European welfare state trends for over a decade, agrees: "Moderate retrenchment and cost containment are a significant part of an ongoing process of welfare state restructuring, but dismantlement has *not* taken place."

Injuries but no Fatalities

What has taken place, exactly? One can examine change within the welfare state by analyzing trends in public social spending or by reviewing policy reforms (that is, changes in policy rules). Ideally, we consider both spending trends and policy reforms; together they allow us to see changes that are largely beyond the control of the state (for example, those that are driven by changing numbers of beneficiaries), as well as social policy reforms that are put in place intentionally (such as changes in the benefit level). Expenditure by itself can't tell us about reforms that won't be felt until the distant future (an increase in the retirement age, for example), and looking only at rule changes makes it difficult to discern the magnitude of the reforms. Let's look at both types of evidence.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provides cross-national data on social expenditure trends from 1980 to 1995. (Unfortunately, comparable spending data for after 1995 are not yet available.) A recent study of fourteen European welfare states, based on these OECD numbers, finds that, despite demographic and fiscal pressures in the 1980s and 1990s, most countries showed an overall pattern of resilience, and some showed marked growth. The study found that between 1980 and 1995, total social expenditures as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) increased, on average, by more than 20 percent.[1] Average social spending rose from just over 22 percent of GDP in 1980 to 27 percent by the middle 1990s.[2] Although the rate of *increase* in social spending (as a share of GDP) fell in most countries after 1980, the trend was still one of growth nearly everywhere. In three countries—Finland, Norway, and Switzerland—the percentage of GDP devoted to social welfare increased by 45 percent or more during these years. Only in two of the Benelux countries—Netherlands and Luxembourg—did the social spending share actually decrease, by very small margins in both cases.

Because GDP expansion outpaced population growth everywhere during these years, total social spending *per capita* showed even more growth. On average, social spending per capita across Europe grew by a remarkable 50 percent between 1980 and 1995—from $3,100 in 1980 to over $4,700 (both in 1990 U.S. dollars). Within that pattern of overall growth, rates of increase varied markedly across these countries, from a high of over 100 percent in Norway to a low of just over 10 percent in the Netherlands. Relative to the 1960s and 1970s, rates of increase declined in some countries after 1980; in no country, however, did per capita social welfare investments actually fall during the 1980s and up to 1995.

Although comparable European spending data are not yet available for the years after 1995, we've been able to follow policy reforms (changes in social welfare law) up through the year 2000. Are the policy reforms consistent with the conclusions based on spending trends—that is, that welfare state commitments remain strong? Policies rolling back social welfare programs were indeed implemented in several European welfare states during those years in three program areas: old-age pensions, unemployment benefits, and disability benefits. With respect to pensions for the elderly, several European countries have either lengthened the average employment period (by increasing contribution requirements and/or

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raising the retirement age) and/or reduced their pension benefit levels (in some cases, by introducing means- or income-testing). While maintaining the basic benefit structure, some European countries have shortened the duration of unemployment benefits and/or reduced replacement rates, mostly in an effort to strengthen workers' "incentives." A number of European countries have also reformed their disability benefit rules. Disability program changes—as seen, for example, in the Netherlands and Sweden—typically tightened eligibility and placed new restrictions on the level or duration of benefits for new applicants.

Taken together, the expenditure trends and the rule changes challenge the popular accounts of social welfare dismantling. Although some countries saw slowdowns in spending growth, and some significant rule changes have indeed been enacted, it is clearly wrong to interpret these changes as the end, or even the beginning of the end, of the welfare state. First, cuts were not adopted in all the major European welfare states. In some countries, only the most marginal rule changes were passed; and, in a substantial number of countries, social expenditures continued to grow at a rapid rate. Second, policy reforms affected only a subset of programs, leaving entire program areas—for example, the core programs of family policy—virtually untouched. Third, while many reforms have resulted in reductions in benefits and/or coverage, or will in the future, most rule changes leave the fundamental program structures intact. A major system shift occurred only in the United Kingdom, and there were no social policy upheavals approaching the magnitude of the 1996 repeal of "welfare" in the United States.

Family Policy: Protected and Expanding

Since 1980, some European social programs have not only escaped the knife, they have grown steadily. Family policy—where European policy offerings are legendary—provides the clearest example. The core components of European family policy include cash benefits for families (most European countries provide universal family allowances), paid family leave benefits (maternity pay for new mothers and longer term parental leave for both parents), and extensive publicly financed child care (including nursery care for children under three and preschool for children three and older).

OECD data reveal that in the same fourteen European countries, average family policy spending (per child) increased by more than 50 percent from 1980 to 1995. Increases were seen in twelve of the fourteen countries and, in three Nordic countries and fast-growing Ireland, per child spending on family policy grew by 100 percent.

Assorted international reports of family policy reforms from 1980 through 2000 add further support to our findings of resilience and growth. First of all, the family allowances—central to the European model—have held steady in most countries and grown modestly in others. Anne Gauthier, an expert in comparative family policy, found that across a large group of European countries on average, policy makers slightly raised family allowance benefit levels between 1975 and 1990. And after 1990? American family policy researchers Sheila Kamerman and Alfred Kahn found that, between 1990 and 1996, the nominal value of family benefits rose in most of Western Europe. Although there were some cuts in the early-middle 1990s—for example, in Sweden—reductions have since been restored, in part because of widespread public support.

While European policy makers held family allowances steady throughout the economic hard times, provisions for paid parental leave—offered to both mothers and fathers—were expanded in several countries, in some cases, substantially. Between 1985 and 1995, a handful of European welfare states initiated major new parental leave programs, and at least eleven more increased the duration of existing leave policies and/or added new rights. In addition, a 1995 EU Directive on Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons called for further policy development in the member states. As a result, many new family leave benefits and rights were enacted between 1996 and 2000.

In a final arena of family policy—public child care, including the famed European preschools—we again find a pattern of expansion over the last two decades. After 1980 and throughout the 1990s, many European coun-

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tries introduced or extended national laws that guarantee access to child care. In 1995, for example, the Danish central government made a commitment to guarantee each child a publicly funded child care slot, starting at age one and lasting until the start of primary school. The next year, similar guarantees were enacted in Sweden and Finland. Partly as a result of these public commitments, now seen all across Europe, the enrollment of European children in public care has risen steadily in recent years and continues to rise.

Policy Advocates Need to Know

Does it matter if policy makers and activists working toward social policy developments in the United States get the European story right? Yes, it does, especially now. Clearly, George W. Bush's administration is unlikely to foster any federal expansion of American social policy. At the same time, an array of social policy initiatives—some of them squarely in the European tradition—are gaining momentum in several of the fifty states. State-level policy activists insist that the stall in Washington won't dampen these campaigns.

In fact, a flurry of legislative activity is already underway. Diverse state coalitions of advocates are working to enact paid family leave, while others are focusing on extending public investments in early childhood education and care. On the paid-family-leave front, programs that would extend either temporary disability insurance or unemployment benefits to workers with care-giving needs are on the agenda in at least nineteen states, including Florida, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, and Nebraska. At the same time, forty-two states now have some form of public preschool services, and expansion is possible in many of them. For example, legislatures in Connecticut, Oklahoma, New Jersey, and New York are considering widening eligibility for public preschool slots.

Why family policy developments now, in these conservative times? One reason is that the employment of American mothers has risen dramatically in recent years, and parents' needs for public support have grown in tandem. Not surprisingly, citizen demands for work/family programs are high and rising. A recent survey conducted for the think tank Zero To Three found, for example, that 85 percent of adults in the United States support expanding "disability or unemployment insurance to help families afford to take off from work to care for a newborn, a newly adopted child, or a seriously ill family member." Similarly, a recent YMCA survey revealed that 75 percent of adults believe that child care is "a greater problem" than it was ten years ago, citing concerns about lack of availability, poor quality, and high cost. Parents' rising demands for more government help with early childhood care and education are bolstered by renewed concerns that U.S. children are lagging internationally in school achievement.

In addition, many advocates say that the recent "welfare reform," for all the damage it promises, has had some beneficial side effects that are opening the door for family policy development in the states. First, the emphasis on moving single mothers from "welfare to work" raised many public officials' awareness of the need for child care, and not just for poor families. Second, the demise of "welfare" and its replacement by state work-based programs, has improved social policy's public image, creating some room for developments that would benefit families throughout the economic spectrum. Finally, the 1996 devolution of large chunks of social policy from the national government to the states strengthened local social policy advocacy networks, just in time for state-based policy campaigns that, in the wake of the 2000 election, now seem the only option.

THE POTENTIAL for some crucial social policy development in the United States—particularly in family policy—means that, now more than ever, U.S. policy makers and advocates alike would do well to look to Europe. In Europe, these same programs are well tested and politically popular. Thus, they offer valuable lessons for the design of benefits, eligibility rules, delivery mechanisms, and financing. Widespread misperceptions in the United States about the collapse of European social policy not only deter advocates from drawing useful lessons from abroad, they create barriers when advocates try to make their case to policy makers. It's crucial that everyone concerned

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with American social policy development understand that, overall, our European neighbors have chosen to nurture and sustain a wide array of social policies, even through the hardest of economic times. ●

JANET C. GORNICK teaches public policy in the Political Science Department at Baruch College, City University of New York. She is collaborating with Marcia Meyers, of Columbia University, on a book about family policy lessons from Europe.

[1] The fourteen countries in this study include Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Total social expenditures include direct government spending on thirteen social welfare programs: (1) old-age cash benefits, (2) disability cash benefits, (3) occupational injury and disease benefits, (4) sickness benefits, (5) services for the elderly and disabled, (6) survivors benefits, (7) family cash benefits, (8) family services, (9) active labor market programs, (10) unemployment benefits, (11) health benefits, (12) housing benefits, and (13) assistance for "contingencies" (such as benefits for immigrants). For a full report of this study, see Janet C. Gornick and Marcia K. Meyers, "Lesson-Drawing in Family Policy: Media Reports and Empirical Evidence about European Developments," *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* (vol 3:1, Spring 2001).

[2] Social welfare spending in the United States lagged behind that of *all* fourteen European countries in 1980 and again in 1995. In 1980, the United States spent 13.4 percent of GDP on social welfare, rising to 15.8 percent in 1995. At both points in time, U.S. spending (relative to GDP) constituted 60 percent of the European average. This provides some counter-evidence to the claim that European social welfare investment levels are shifting toward U.S. levels.

Germany Remembers the Sixties

A Letter from Berlin

Susan Neiman

THE PHOTOGRAPHS of the foreign minister should not have surprised anyone. Indeed, most observers of German politics were still getting used to seeing him in three-piece suits when the pictures of Joschka Fischer lunging at a Frankfurt police officer during a violent demonstration in the 1970s leaped from the photo archives to the front pages. The coalition government that had, for the first time, made the Greens part of the national government and Fischer the second most powerful man in it, was as clear a change of generational paradigm as politics ever offers. Here was an unsettling confirmation of the change.

Far more than prime minister Gerhard Schroeder, Fischer embodies the new phase in German politics. On the left, he was never regarded as a man of vision; but someone who can become foreign minister without ever acquiring a high school diploma can, if he is clever, arouse widespread admiration. Fischer is definitely clever, and quick on his feet, and he soon soared above Schroeder in the popularity polls. Although other nations may not think twice about referring to their leaders as Tony, Bill, or Bibi, Fischer—whose given name is Joseph—is the first German politician in memory to be known by his nickname.

Suddenly, for several months this winter, there were calls for his resignation. The fact that the calls came from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), still hurt by last year's revelations of financial scandals, didn't make them less threatening. Fischer had to testify at the trial of a terrorist he had known in the seventies—the first time a minister in office had been subpoenaed on criminal charges. While the court was busy finding his relation to the accused to be unexceptionable, critics busied themselves with another relationship. A different former terrorist had written a memoir in which she claimed to have shared a commune in Frankfurt with Fischer some time in 1972,

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a claim he initially categorically denied. She responded with a description of a breakfast conversation. He reconsidered. There had been a woman's commune next to the men's commune; it was always possible that the former terrorist had spent a few nights there, even possible that they'd exchanged sleepy phrases over stale bread and Nescafé. Anyone who expected him to remember all the encounters that took place on all those mornings had no clue about what it was like to be alive then.

Here Fischer's defense trod on dangerous ground, and not only because it looked like waffling under fire. Memory is a political category like no other in Germany. Vicious tongues—and where there is success like Fischer's, they will never be absent—were quick to point out that words like these were used in self-defense by his generation's archenemies. Nazi fellow-travelers were prone to justify themselves with a kind of pious whine: those were turbulent times, we were engaged in life and death struggle with the enemies of civilization itself, and anybody who expects us to remember every little mistake made on the way does not understand what we lived through.

MORE THAN anything, the German sixties were about memory. German students who took to the streets shared dreams of liberation with their contemporaries in Paris, Prague, and Berkeley. Common to all of them was frustration with cramped and hypocritical cultural forms whose day, they firmly believed, was done. But frustration is not quite rage, and unique to the German movement was a quality of anger whose source is no mystery. The establishment they were attacking had been built by, and still contained large numbers of, ex-Nazis who were no more repentant than expediency required. Even worse: precisely the middle-class youths who, in Germany as elsewhere, formed the backbone of the New Left, had to face the fact that their parents and teachers were overrepresented among those who had voluntarily joined the Nazi party.

Kent State notwithstanding, this realization produced convulsions for which the American sixties had no parallel. It is simply true: fury at the father whose complacent suburban existence is untouched by whatever the plumber or the plumber's kid did at My Lai is different from fury at the father who will not tell you exactly what he himself did in the *Wehrmacht*. The German left's demand to remember was a demand to own up to a past that was as personal as it was criminal. The past was always present, and immeasurably diffuse. Nothing was beyond the bounds of criticism; nothing, in the words of Theodor Adorno, was merely harmless. The tendencies to see traces of Nazism in every moment of ordinary life often had grotesque consequences. The demonstration at which Fischer hit the police officer was not a demonstration against the war in Vietnam or the putsch in Chile; it was aimed at certain forms of speculation in northern European housing developments. These had led groups of young people to take over empty apartment buildings in a movement called "squatting" in peaceful Amsterdam, "occupying" in neighboring Germany. The latter terminology lent itself to such slogans as "Better to occupy empty houses than foreign countries!"—an assertion not much more eloquent than giving one's elders the finger. That there might indeed have been room for this form of expression was often chillingly demonstrated by the shouts of angry bystanders: "Too bad they forgot to gas you too!"

Nostalgia for the German sixties thus seems out of place, but this doesn't preclude a form of pride. Under Konrad Adenauer, the CDU instituted reparations payments but not discourse. The sixties demanded discussion and opened up a memory debate of nearly industrial proportions. Political demand produced a scholarly apparatus. Ask a librarian for a good summary of the debate about the Berlin Holocaust memorial that is now under construction and you will receive a collection of articles the size of the Manhattan phone book. It is hard to find a small German town that hasn't participated in the memory hunt, which invariably includes a trip to the nearest Jewish cemetery, along with a painstaking investigation tracing the steps of those nice neighbors, the Blumenthals, who disappeared one morning in 1942. The memory business can strike outsiders alternatively as painful and painfully

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amusing; more than one commentator has noted a sinister tendency to prefer the memory of dead Jews to the ordinary experience of living ones. But seen over the span of a generation, one has to judge the efforts as largely successful. The willingness to rip itself and its elders apart was a willingness to pay Germany's dues in something more essential than cash. It showed the world that one German generation, at least, had grasped the fact that business as usual was over; more than the normal lines had been crossed.

If the sixties signified an attitude toward the past, it was always tied to the present and the future. Right-wing violence toward foreigners has resurged at different moments and is currently a problem again. Still, it is a problem in context: Germany has admitted more asylum-seekers than other European states and is still behind England, France, and Italy in incidents of violence directed against them. Germany is also, slowly, redefining itself as a country that is not racially constituted, but in principle open to immigration. While the latter is the result of a recognition that sinking population figures will soon bring economic deficits, it is also fed by a sixties-inspired insistence on remembering that hostility toward the Other has consequences that will be visited on countless generations.

The right happily responded to the Fischer photos by insisting that the left do some memory work of its own. Somebody located the relevant police officer, so that Fischer could apologize personally for charging at him thirty years earlier. The man, to whom fate had given the surname Marx, responded genially: after all that time he felt no rancor, and it isn't, after all, everyone who gets hit in the line of duty by a future foreign minister. All this, said the opposition, was not enough. It was time for the left to abandon its ever-present self-righteousness and examine its own sins.

The left's reaction was a great disappointment. Two kinds of responses were offered. The first was an exercise in false memory: one columnist after another rushed to remind readers that the sixties had started in Berkeley, not Berlin; that the sit-in was the product of the civil rights movement, not the Frankfurt School; so the entire uproar was actually a foreign import. Looking for others to blame is always embarrassing, but such claims were especially and painfully striking for those of us who remember that the German left was once so violently anti-American that it was prone to deny the very existence of leftist American culture (or indeed of culture in America at all). The reminders of the American sixties thus mark a welcome change in the relationship of contemporary Germans to America, but they give little evidence of historical self-understanding. The left's other response was an astounding *mea culpa*: we erred, we were violent, but deserve your forgiveness, for now we too have learned that there's no substitute for liberal democracy.

As short-term political strategy, this was successful. The calls for Fischer's resignation are now confined to the right fringes. Even his far less popular colleague, Green environmental minister Jürgen Tritten, managed to stay in office after two awkward revelations that revealed his own sixties origins. The coalition that seemed rocky in March is stronger than ever, if only because the CDU is flailing under a leader, Angela Merkel, whose politically correct features—she is the first East German woman to achieve such a position of power—do not make up for the fact that she is a terrible politician. As I write, German news is dominated by debates over the shape of the new immigration law, the mad-cow disease crisis, and the amount of money to be allotted to families with children.

But if it is no longer dominating headlines, there is still good reason to think the sixties debate will dominate the election next year. This is partly because there are so few other concrete things to debate. Germany is a country whose basic social democratic commitments cannot be challenged by anyone aspiring to political relevance. Both the health and educational systems are in need of repair, but in a society where every office worker views six weeks annual vacation as a fundamental human right, the CDU cannot propose more than minimal cuts in the social system. Indeed, demographic necessity has brought all parties to agree on the need for in-

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creasing support for families with children as well as encouraging immigration. The disagreements about the best ways of doing these things are tactical; substantial differences loom very small. Nor do foreign policy discussions seem likely to generate disagreements that will move voters in any numbers. So what is left to distinguish government from opposition? At present, the only issue on the horizon likely to generate controversy is murkily ideological: where do you stand on the sixties?

At the opening of the new Israeli embassy in May of this year—a first for Berlin— Fischer received a long ovation. It could not be for anything he said; his speech contained nothing but the usual assurances that Germany was aware of its past guilt and its future obligations to the Jewish people. The warmth with which Fischer was received, in contrast to the polite reception accorded Berlin's longtime CDU mayor, was a function of the perception that Fischer's clichés are backed by his own rocky history. The claim that the German people's guilt is constitutive of its identity is not, for Fischer, confined to ceremonial occasions, but part of the self-awareness with which he took to the streets some thirty years ago. He has an ability to represent, for outsiders, something larger than himself.

Will the German left appreciate that ability, and use it aggressively? The saddest aspect of the Fischer affair is the fact that the reporter who unearthed the original photos is the daughter of Ulrike Meinhof. Meinhof was a very eloquent terrorist who headed what the right-wing press referred to as the Baader-Meinhof gang. Her death in jail under mysterious circumstances in 1976 gave the German left an ambiguous martyr. That her daughter clearly made the photos public as an act of revenge toward those leaders who managed to survive the sixties, and survive them brilliantly, is only an extreme example of the way the left can tear up its own. In refusing to give Fischer more than a lukewarm defense, German leftists forgot that his success is the success of a generation whose struggles have given their country a chance at normality, showing that Germany can rebuild not only its bombed-out factories, but also its devastated morality. Let us hope they remember in time for the next election. ●

Susan Neiman is director of the Einstein Forum, Potsdam.

To Our Contributors

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The Editors

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Israel, Palestine, and Territorial Partition

Gadi Taub

In the midst of bloodshed it is hard to keep in mind that in cases of prolonged conflict, peace is achieved, more often than not, after violent convulsions. So it was with the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the peace between Israel and Egypt, and so it was with the first intifada and the Oslo Accord. People often turn to compromise only after failing to impose their maximum demands. Diplomacy, in this sense, is the continuation of war by other means, but (so we hope) aimed at ends cut to realistic size. It is less a product of goodwill than a recognition of impossibilities.

I don't mean that war leads naturally to peace. It may well lead to more wars. Right now, it is too early to tell which way the Israeli-Palestinian war will lead. Prospects for peace, as I am writing, seem bleak. So far, neither side is seeking a definitive military victory. Instead, the two seem to have the same double purpose in mind: exhausting the other side and winning over international public opinion. Measures are therefore calculated to be painful and provocative, yet limited and controlled. Presumably both sides assume that the first to lose its nerve will either despair and accept defeat or commit some awful atrocity and lose international support. It is, in other words, a dangerously volatile war of brinksmanship.

The leaders now in power are unlikely to promote compromise. Ariel Sharon was elected because of, not despite, his violent reputation, and Yasir Arafat proves himself again and again a permanent eve-of-the-revolution leader. He thrives on apocalyptic rhetoric. Should he commit to the mundane business of compromise, the crest of popular anger that he is now riding is likely to overwhelm him.

The current violence may promote de facto separation of the two peoples or it may lead to a Bosnian entanglement. It may force the two national movements to acknowledge the limits of their aspirations—neither can take possession of the whole territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean—or it may lead to an entrenchment of maximalist fantasies. It may bring the dreams of fanatics on both sides—greater Israel and no Israel at all—up against the rock of reality, forcing the protagonists, in exhaustion, toward a middle ground. Or, it may produce only the mutuality of revenge and endless retaliation.

But violence does not operate in a void. The crucial division that will determine which way the conflict turns is between the forces that promote territorial partition and the forces that threaten or inhibit it. In the long run, the feasibility of physical partition is what stands between us—Israelis and Palestinians together—and a repetition of Bosnia or Lebanon. So, taking the long view, I will discuss here four of the factors that threaten partition and blur the possible boundary between the two nations: the settlers' movement for a greater Israel, the growing tendency on the Israeli left to misunderstand national aspiration, the Palestinian demand for a "right of return," and the presence in Israel of a large minority of Arab citizens.

Settlements

In the first days of violence following Sharon's pilgrimage to the Temple Mount, there was much talk of "shock" among the supporters of territorial compromise. The cry that rose from the hawkish right—*We told you so!*—Seemed to have caught the dovish left without an answer. The assumption that the Oslo peace process would lead to the resolution of the conflict by peaceful means indeed exploded in our faces, and the left seemed paralyzed by self-

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doubt—as if the right had another plan for resolving the conflict. But the fact is that the right has never had a plan. No right-wing government has ever dared to suggest the annexation of the Occupied Territories. Even the leaders of the settlers' movement dared not pronounce what may well be their secret hope: to suffocate the Palestinian national movement by creating a Jewish majority in the territories. Another acre, another goat—as in the old Zionist creed—or, better, another caravan, another settlement, would gradually tilt the demographic balance in such a way as to enable Israel to annex the territories without endangering its Jewish majority. At best, this is what lies behind the slogan "peace in the next generation" that leaders of the settlers have begun to use. At worst, it conceals a more violent vision: the hope that under the conditions of a large enough war, massive deportation, as an ad-hoc military measure, could be carried out. But massive deportation is a crime that Israelis, or at least the majority of them, could not tolerate. It is also not a realistic option in the current international context. Neither the international community nor the neighboring Arab countries would ever reconcile themselves to it. The refugees of 1948, despite the fact that "transferring" populations was a more common practice everywhere at that time, still haunt the conflict. It is unlikely that more refugees would solve the problem.

A GRADUAL INCREASE in the Jewish population of the territories is no more realistic. First, it is not clear where a Jewish majority would come from. Short of massive immigration from the Diaspora, which is not going to happen, the total balance of populations between the Jordan River and the sea will not change if Israelis move to the territories. And even if many do move, the Palestinian national movement has reached such a point that it would never give up its hope for an independent state. Israel is no more able to hold the territories than France was able to hold Algeria or Indochina, or England India. All that the further enlarging of settlements can achieve is a permanent civil war. So long as there is a clear line along which partition is possible—in the minds of Israelis and Palestinians as well as on the ground—the two populations can still divide into two sovereign states, each containing a large enough majority to fulfill its national aspirations. Such a separation will not be neat, but if there is a critical mass of the population on either side of the 1967 "Green Line" that can view itself as the core of the nation, that will be enough for stability. The effort of the settlers to erase the Green Line, psychologically as well as physically, is the most clear and present danger to this separation.

The Left and National Sentiment

It is therefore no surprise that the instincts of the Israeli left led it, at the eruption of violence, to blame the settlers for the uprising. There is merit in such a critique. The settlers' attempt to thwart partition and compromise, under the guise of "postponing" agreements while at the same time enlarging the settlements, should be vigorously rejected. It is no time for "unity" among Israelis in the face of the crisis. But the same instinct that drives the argument against the settlers also blinds significant parts of the left to the nature of the conflict and the way to its resolution. In the long years of opposing settlement, two damaging beliefs have taken root among Israeli doves. The first is that one should resist national sentiment everywhere and always. Because the settlers have co-opted the Jewish national aspiration, pronounced themselves its true bearers, and dressed their cause in its symbols, the left has tended to eschew it. The symbols of the nation became tainted with the moral stain of the occupation. Moral argument on the left, in the popular sphere as well as in more articulated political debate, drifted gradually away from national liberation toward individual human rights (this was greatly facilitated by the immense influence of American culture in Israel). The left tended to identify nationalism as the source of all evil and to blur the distinction the Hebrew language offers between national and chauvinist aspiration (*leumiyut*/*leumanut*). As a result, some leftists lost sight of the national nature of the conflict and of its only resolution: "two states for two peoples." Both the logic of Zionism and the logic of peace require the sober recognition of the power of

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national aspiration.

If we strip the moral basis of Zionism to its very algebra, we find two arguments. One draws on the *universal* right of "all peoples," as the Israeli Declaration of Independence clearly states, to self-determination. This was the ground for the activity of mainstream political Zionism, the bedrock of Theodore Herzl's vision. The other is the *unique* right of Jews to the land of Israel.

In recent years we have witnessed an attempt by public figures on both the right and the left to rewrite the history of Zionism to obliterate the centrality of the universal right to self-determination and replace it with the unique right of Jews to the land. Theodor Herzl as he appears, for instance, in Yoram Hazony's book *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul*, has turned into the prophet of the unique right. Herzl's famous "Uganda" proposal—his plan to create a Jewish state on territory that is now part of Kenya—is, of course, not discussed in the book; nor is it to be found in the settlers' version of national history. But the reduction of Zionism to the unique-right argument is by no means restricted to the political right. Some leftists have rewritten history in a remarkably similar way. The unique right to the land and the negation of the "Other" have become the cornerstone of the post-Zionist version of Zionist history. The reasons for these almost identical versions of historical revisionism are obviously not the same: the right wishes to sanctify the occupation by linking it backward in time to early Zionism, and post-Zionists wish to delegitimize early Zionism by linking it forward in time to the occupation. Both, however, produce the same historical distortion.

The truth is that the left's objection to the occupation, which hardened over more than thirty years, was never rooted in individual human rights alone. To be sure, Israel has violated human rights in the territories for many years, and there is much force in this moral argument. But it has never stood alone. The objection to the occupation, from the beginning, drew much of its force from the universal right of peoples, which was at the very heart of Zionism. The political logic of Zionism led us—not easily, not immediately—to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Palestinian demand for a national state. Because we grounded our own independence on the right of national self-determination, our very commitment to Zionism was what forced us to recognize the Palestinian right to independence. The Palestinians, for their part, loudly and clearly demand recognition of their national rights, not only their individual rights.

But what happened on the Israeli side was not as simple as a logical deduction. After the 1967 war, the argument for Zionism's moral legitimacy was split into its two component parts, which had co-existed previously in uneasy peace: the universal right of peoples led us, on the political left, to oppose the occupation; the unique right of the Jews led others, on the political right, to support it. But as this split unfolded, a part of the left, in the heat of the struggle, let the right determine what Zionism "really" is, blinding itself to the actual nature of the conflict. The acknowledgment of Palestinian rights springs from empathy for national yearning, not estrangement from it. Arguing for personal liberty, at the expense of, rather than as a complement to, national liberty, has led a part of the left to drift away from the insistence on "two states for two peoples." At the margin it led post-Zionists, much like "post-colonial" intellectuals—Edward Said comes to mind here—to the folly of "a state of all its citizens": a single state between the Jordan and the sea, a "pure" democracy with no national character at all. But creating "a state of all its citizens" means frustrating the national aspirations of the Palestinians as well as the Israelis. To Palestinian ears it must sound remarkably like the settlers' plan. It spells annexation, even if, ostensibly, to an American- or Western-style constitutional democracy.

Given the force with which national sentiments have erupted in recent months, and given the fact that Palestinian demonstrators burn the American flag, not just the Israeli flag, this solution seems strangely out of touch with the most obvious features of the conflict. Abandoning the national logic of the conflict would deprive the Palestinian people of their rights; the proposed non-national state would be a state of all its warring citizens.

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Return

For the same reasons, the left must firmly oppose the Palestinian demand for the right of the 1948 refugees to return to Israel itself (as opposed to the West Bank and Gaza). Accepting return means renouncing Israel's national existence. After a massive influx of Palestinians, Israel would either cease to be Jewish or cease to be democratic. This is a sure recipe for permanent civil war. The Israeli left should resist return (as most of it indeed does) not as a "concession" to the hawks but *for the very same reason* that it opposes the settlements: both are obstacles on the way to "two states for two peoples."

The agreement at the end of this war must include an explicit and final renunciation of the right of return, which means, in essence, acknowledging the legitimacy of a Jewish nation-state alongside a Palestinian nation-state. Perhaps this renunciation is too difficult for the Palestinians. But if this is the case, or as long as it is the case, Israel can only meet force with force. If Palestinians embarked on this war to win the right of return, they should come out of it with the realization that return cannot be won. Otherwise, there will be no resolution of the conflict, no partition of the land.

Israeli Arabs

A partition agreement, however, cannot be a clear-cut separation. First and foremost, there is a large Arab minority among the citizens of Israel. The most disturbing thing about the current eruption of violence was the fact that for the first time Israeli Arabs participated in the Palestinian intifada. The murderous response of the Israeli authorities—thirteen Arab citizens were shot to death—is not just a moral outrage, it is also a piece of political folly. Indeed, it turned many Arab votes away from Ehud Barak and helped deliver victory to Sharon. But, more important, if Israel is to reach an agreement that would create a Palestinian state, it must also reach an accommodation with its Arab citizens. The stability of any separation along the Green Line (with whatever adjustments) requires that Israel grant its Arab citizens in fact the equality it has been promising them in principle.

In the event, Israeli Arabs suspended their own riotous demonstrations only a few days after the intifada began—despite the justified anger that has been building up for so many years. It appears that they still accept the Green Line as the one realistic boundary for geographical partition. Arab Israelis are still considered, by themselves as well as others, to be a different case from Palestinians in the territories. The prospect of destroying Israel seemed to these Israeli citizens unrealistic; despite their unequal status within Israel, they have too much to lose from a permanent civil war. To be sure, in a Jewish nation-state, they will never be able to share the national sentiment. But the emerging Palestinian state, if it ever emerges, will be of crucial importance in ameliorating their predicament. Israel can and should open up its society to their full participation; it can and should provide them equal governmental services and individual rights; and it can and should grant them cultural autonomy in such areas as education. It should, in other words, make them feel at home as best it can under the existing conditions. If all this is done, then we might realistically expect that the Palestinian state will give a partial answer to their national aspirations. Israelis, of all people, should understand such imperfect solutions. After all, so many Jews around the world are deeply attached to Israel, though most of them don't plan to immigrate to it. Israel is, for these Jews, a tangible object of yearning, an emotional focus for national sentiments that are somehow split between the country in which they live and the Jewish state. Israel's very existence provides them with the option of immigration, should they need it, as well as with a source of pride and sense of security. Often Israelis are impatient with the Israeli patriotism of diaspora Jews. But they understand its origins and importance. In an optimal scenario—far from perfect, but nevertheless realistic—full civil rights, political equality, a measure of autonomy, and the existence of a Palestinian state, taken together, will make the unique situation of Arab Israelis tolerable, perhaps even fairly comfortable, both morally and emotionally.

All this seems far away. But the fact is that the violence, as long as it remains limited and

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controlled, is also a form of negotiation. Sharon's early declaration that no negotiations would take place so long as shootings and bombings go on has proved untenable. The danger of cutting off all security cooperation is just too great. And so, oddly, both sides shoot on the one hand and negotiate, directly or indirectly, the scale of "legitimate" shooting on the other. Still, this is a very dangerous kind of negotiation. A school bus going up in flames or a slaughter at a mosque could send the whole region into a convulsion of violence, even into total war. Still, there isn't going to be a winner in this war, and the long, bloody stalemate (if we can sustain the stalemate) may force on us all the necessity of territorial compromise. Ultimately, however, it will be the strategic elements of partition—settlement policy, the national parameters of the conflict, the right of return, and the position of Arab Israelis—that will determine the final outcome of the clashes, that will determine, indeed, whether or not the century-long conflict between Arabs and Jews can ever be resolved. ●

GADI TAUB is co-editor of *Mikarov*, an Israeli journal of literature and society.

Italy: Divided They Fall

Joanne Barkan

WHAT A DIFFERENCE fourteen days can make. On May 13, the center-left coalition that had governed Italy since 1996 lost control of both houses of Parliament to the center-right coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi. Journalists everywhere have already catalogued the mind-boggling extent of Berlusconi's business empire, his domination of Italy's media, his refusal to divest holdings since he entered politics in 1994, and the eight court cases in which he is being investigated for everything from bribing judges to laundering money to association with the Mafia. For many Europeans outside Italy, his election is a political and ethical calamity for Italian democracy (some abandoned "good form" during the campaign to agitate against him). For the Italian center-left, Berlusconi's election is that calamity and more. Taken together, the parties of the center-left actually increased their share of the vote, but they couldn't find a way to cooperate. Divided, they caused their own defeat.

Then fourteen days later, the center-left won run-off mayoral elections in Rome, Turin, and Naples—the three major cities in play. That evening, three hundred thousand people crowded into Rome's Piazza del Popolo in a cathartic celebration, cheering party leaders and weeping with relief. For many observers, it was the coalition's most cohesive moment in five years. The parliamentary fiasco had jolted the parties into working effectively enough to avoid another electoral rout and complete demoralization.

But winning in three key cities doesn't diminish Berlusconi's victory. His coalition has a solid parliamentary majority over the main opposition coalition (177 seats to 125 in the Senate; 368 to 250 in the Chamber of Deputies, although several seats are still in dispute). He's likely to govern for a full five-year term (if he stays out of jail). In addition, his own party, *Forza Italia*, rolled right over its coalition partners. Under Italy's byzantine electoral law, parties compete for 75 percent of the seats in Parliament in a winner-takes-all system. Most of the parties consolidate into either a center-left coalition or a center-right coalition to vie for these seats. They run as separate parties and as competitors in a proportional voting system for 25 percent of the seats. *Forza Italia*'s share of the proportional vote in the Chamber

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of Deputies jumped from 20.6 percent to 29.4 percent while its coalition partners all lost ground. *Forza Italia* is now Italy's largest party by a wide margin.

The American press reported that the center-left and center-right had much the same program. That's partially correct. In economic policy, they both promised the moon on the spending side (vast public works programs, development funds for the South, more money for teachers and low-income pensioners, improved social services). On the income side, they both promised lower taxes. The center-right, however, promised to cut taxes on investments, venture capital, financial transactions, and employers' payroll. The center-left emphasized relief for moderate- and low-income taxpayers. In reality, big spending and tax cuts can't be on any government's agenda if Italy is to stay in Europe's single currency system. Between 1996 and 1998, the center-left government cut spending enough to squeeze Italy into the required limits, but just barely.

The two coalitions differ on labor relations and on social and cultural issues. The center-right supports deregulating the labor market so that companies can fire workers more easily, hire them on more profitable terms, and weaken the unions. Part of the center-left opposes deregulation; part supports a milder version. On issues of sexuality, family policy, education, scientific research, and public monies for religious (in practice, Catholic) institutions, the center-right takes conservative, Vatican-friendly positions. Overall, the center-left takes more left-leaning stands on these issues, but the coalition is divided.

Internal divisions are the curse of the center-left. The main coalition, called the Olive Tree, consists of seven or eight ever-in-flux parties and mini-formations, ranging from center to socialist left. There are also several parties outside the Olive Tree. During its five years in office, the coalition devoured three prime ministers and four governments (ministerial cabinets). With each power play and cabinet reshuffling, the coalition worked less effectively and looked less appealing. This year the Olive Tree broke into three groups for the proportional voting: the Left Democrats (remains of the former Communist Party), the Daisy, and the Sunflower. (*Who* picks these names?) The Daisy was actually a coalition of four parties, and the Sunflower was an election alliance of two others.

The Olive Tree's fatal misstep was failure to achieve a campaign agreement with two independent groups: the centrist Di Pietro Slate, which was a vehicle for a celebrity prosecutor-turned-politician, and Communist Refounding (*Rifondazione Comunista*), a part of the Communist Party that held onto its communist identity after the fall of the Berlin Wall. If their candidates had run in cooperation with Olive Tree candidates, the center-left would have remained in power.

A DISMAL TRADITION of intraparty cannibalism in post-1945 Italy still infects both right and left. The fact that in the United States a Paul Wellstone and a Diane Feinstein can function in the same political party for more than six months does not translate into Italian. Disagreements rarely end in compromise or with someone losing the skirmish but sticking around to fight another day. More often, the minority launches a bitter and obstructionist internal opposition or quits and founds a new party. Berlusconi's dangerous solution to this problem was to use his personal resources ($12-14 billion in assets, three television networks with a 45-percent audience share, and Italy's largest advertising agency) to build the electoral equivalent of a one-man juggernaut.

The victories in Rome, Turin, and Naples have not resolved any of the political disagreements among the center-left parties or inside the Olive Tree. The Catholics and the secularists differ on social policy. The business types and the social democrats clash over economic policy. The coalition's left wing sees labor unions as crucial for defending wage earners and the unemployed. The centrists and even some Left Democrats see the unions as a backward interest group that stifles economic progress. The smaller parties can't agree with the larger ones on a new voting system (which Italy desperately needs).

And then there's the chronic dilemma, debated since 1996: Should the Olive Tree remain a coalition of autonomous parties, each

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with its own political identity, or should it become a single party with a single leadership? And if it's a single party, will it be social democratic or reformist with a more centrist bent? The parliamentary elections gave the debate a new twist by upsetting power relations inside the Olive Tree. The Left Democrats tumbled from 21.1 percent of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies to 16.6 percent. The new Daisy group won a surprisingly high 14.5 percent.

Just days after the vote, the president of Italy's powerful association of business leaders called on the upcoming government to make "difficult choices." Everyone understood this as code for abolishing part of the Workers' Statute—the 1970 law that spelled out workers' rights for the first time in Italy. Berlusconi promptly responded that he was ready and willing. The secretary of the largest union confederation warned that the workers would fight back. It remains to be seen if they will fight Berlusconi alone or be joined by a strong and united political opposition. ●

JOANNE BARKAN is a New York-based writer and author of *Visions of Emancipation: The Italian Workers' Movement Since 1945*.

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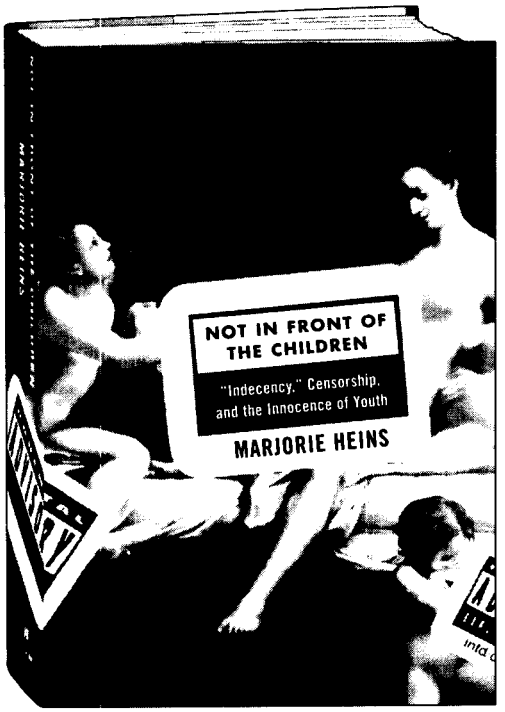

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Green Politics in the Bush Era

Anti-environmentalism's Second Wave

Ken Conca

From cabinet appointments to policy initiatives, much about environmental politics in George Bush the Younger's administration is depressingly familiar. We've seen this show before, when Ronald Reagan, his secretary of the interior James Watt, and company rode into Washington intent on rolling back the federal apparatus for environmental protection. Yet much has changed in the ensuing two decades. As comfortable pro-environment tactics of lobbying and litigation have grown less effective, new forms of citizen environmental activism are emerging. Economic globalization has also blurred the boundaries between domestic and international environmental problems, confirming the old saw among environmentalists that everything is connected to everything else. The struggles may be the same—resisting regulatory rollback, preventing the plunder of the public trust, expanding the right to know and participate. But the terrain on which they occur has shifted substantially.

Bush's appointments offer a clear sign of where the new administration is headed. His energy secretary, Spencer Abraham, was targeted by the League of Conservation Voters as one of its "dirty dozen" in the 2000 election (with the voters of Michigan apparently agreeing). Interior Secretary Gale Norton once argued before the Supreme Court that "land use control is beyond the regulatory power of Congress because it is outside the scope of interstate commerce." Some straw-grasping environmentalists looked to the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Christine Whitman, as a moderating influence, pointing to her suburbanite-pleasing efforts as governor to protect New Jersey's dwindling open spaces and tout "smart growth." But Whitman slashed her state's environmental protection budget by almost one-third, cut back on enforcement, cozied up to business by pushing the idea of "voluntary compliance," removed a thousand chemicals from New Jersey's right-to-know list of toxic substances, and abolished the state's environmental prosecutor.

With its team in place, the new administration has made its goals clear: to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling, expand market rights to pollute, and reverse Bill Clinton's eleventh-hour actions on everything from public lands to air and water quality. Bush has blamed California's electricity crisis on environmental regulations and made it clear that a campaign promise to combat global warming by treating carbon dioxide as a pollutant was, well, a campaign promise. He reversed a last-minute Clinton decision tightening the limits on arsenic in drinking water—overturning the level recommended by the World Health Organization and reinstating indefinitely a U.S. standard set almost sixty years ago. Following the administration's lead, Congress has rushed in with a wave of bills to do everything from lowering clean-up standards at toxic sites to boosting coal use by weakening air-quality standards.

To some extent, we can expect a replay of the political dramas of the Reagan-Watt era. Public access to information will be curtailed in the interests of "streamlining" the regulatory process. Uncertainty will become the mantra of those seeking inaction or rollback. The burden of scientific proof will be pushed even further onto those seeking sensible precaution in the face of potential disasters, be it on climate change, toxic substances, genetically modified organisms, or mad cows. Short-term fluctuations such as gasoline price spikes or electricity shortages will be used to justify an agenda of offshore oil drilling, expanded resource ex-

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traction on public lands, and the rehabilitation of nuclear power as a "clean" energy source.

Perhaps most important, the boundaries between public and private will be pushed in whatever direction serves corporate interests. On the one hand, we will see a strong effort to curtail public interventions: More entry points will be established for "market-based" approaches; funding will be cut for market-correcting environmental enforcement and criminal prosecution; and emphasis on "voluntary compliance" will give new meaning to the idea of faith-based public policy. At the same time, the usefulness of the state will not be neglected: A wave of new subsidies will appear for Big Energy's agenda on oil, coal, and nuclear power, and all talk of raising fees set in the nineteenth century for resource extraction on public lands will disappear.

In response, the big Washington-based environmental groups will probably see their coffers swell as they market the threat of climate change and oil drilling in wilderness areas—just as they did with rainforests and the ozone hole in the Reagan era. Congress may fight back on such battle-tested public concerns as toxic waste and national parks. Democrats may even try to use broad public concern about the environment as a wedge issue against Bush, much as Clinton exploited the public's environmental concerns to stall the Contract with America. But on the less glamorous matters—holding the line on funding, enforcement, and implementation—it is all too likely that enough Democrats will defect or just disappear.

THE FAMILIARITY of this pattern notwithstanding, there are some critical differences this time around, suggesting both promise and peril. In the domestic sphere, public concern and grassroots mobilization on environmental matters is strong and growing—but the traditional channels to translate those sentiments into public policy have eroded badly since Reagan tested their limits in the early 1980s. Given the message from media, government, and too many Clinton-style environmentalists, the American public could be forgiven for not worrying about environmental problems. Nevertheless, concern remains deep. An independent poll funded by the League of Conservation Voters after the 2000 election showed clean air and water to be a top-three public concern (along with education and health care, and well above Bush's touted issue of tax cuts). The poll showed a five-to-one preference for candidates who support "strong environmental laws" over those who favor "reduced regulation on business." Eighty-one percent of those surveyed thought that we need either tougher laws or tougher enforcement of existing laws. Eighty-three percent rejected the idea of a trade-off between the environment and the economy, with only 14 percent agreeing that "sometimes. . .we must choose one over the other."

To be sure, throwaway lifestyles and robust sales of sport-utility vehicles suggest more than a bit of contradiction in these attitudes. But why should this surprise us, given media inattention to the issues, the enduring myth that Clinton was an environmental president for more than his last few weeks, and the failure of the national environmental organizations to draw a different picture sharply and forcefully in public debate? The point is less that Americans will say one thing and do another than that broad public support for strong action remains an unexploited resource in American national politics.

The central problem is that the usual links for translating these strong but somewhat inchoate public concerns into law and policy have frayed badly. In a few decades, mainstream American environmentalism has gone from being one of the most effective and well-grounded lobbies on Capitol Hill to a shadowy presence, applauding quietly from the wings as Clinton sneaked through several measures during the dying days of his administration. The EPA announced tough new rules on diesel emissions a few days before Christmas. A long-awaited ban on new road building in nearly sixty million acres of national forest was slipped through by executive order in early January. The EPA announced a strict new standard on arsenic levels in drinking water on January 22, literally as the trappings of the inauguration were going up around Washington. Unable or unwilling to build a movement by fighting these battles in the media and the Congress, too many environmental advocates

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in the Clinton years traded access for action and grew comfortable with environmental protection by administrative fiat.

This back-door approach is both cause and symptom of dwindling political effectiveness. Those seeking to derail Norton's appointment as secretary of the interior apparently lacked evidence that she had employed an illegal alien or rented the wrong videos. But they were armed with her remarkable career record of hostility to all things environmental: as a Watt protégé, as an advocate for the infamous Mountain States Legal Foundation, and as a Colorado attorney general who gutted environmental enforcement. They proved unable to mobilize either citizens or senators; some didn't even try. Norton spoke cautiously to the evenly divided Senate and became the chief steward of American public lands by a vote of seventy-five to twenty-four.

When Bush announced that the United States considered the Kyoto climate agreement dead, a spate of op-ed pieces and cartoons in the establishment press wondered whether former vice president Al Gore would speak out. The irony—that Gore was mostly silent on the issue for eight years as vice president—is hard to miss. But more telling is the fact that the national environmental organizations increasingly cannot carry their own message to the public.

Nor are the courts, the other great tool of administrative environmentalism, likely to be the answer. The Supreme Court recently upheld the EPA's statutory power to set clean air standards without considering the economic impact on polluters. But with the volume of new environmental legislation dwindling and the courts having grown more conservative, litigation is mostly a defensive action. Even when the courts do affirm the power of public-interest environmental regulation, most of the existing framework laws allow plenty of room for inaction on implementation and enforcement. Indeed, the courts can be an effective tool of regulatory rollback. Stung by public reaction to some of its early anti-environmental decisions, the new administration used the run-up to Earth Day 2001 to trumpet the fact that it would allow a few last-minute Clinton regulations to stand—safe in the knowledge that legal challenges from polluters and developers would create opportunities for rollback in the form of "compromise" settlements outside the media glare.

If there is good news in this story, it is that new forms of advocacy are emerging even as the traditional tools of mainstream environmentalism have grown unreliable or unused. Many communities and local activist groups have made good use of Clinton measures that expanded community "right to know" rules on toxics and created at least limited entry points for claims of environmental injustice and environmental racism. A recent study of ballot measures in last November's elections identified more than five hundred measures in thirty-eight states on sprawl, growth, and open spaces. Seventy-two percent were successful. This grassroots explosion in the search for sustainable communities faces several challenges: It must avoid being neutered by "smart-growth" sloganeering; it must avoid polarization between its separate strands responding to urban toxification and suburban sprawl; and it must find the abundant common ground that lies in citizen rights to information and participation and in the defense of public spaces against enclosure, be it wild lands or town centers.

The political terrain has changed on the international scene as well. Indeed, one of the biggest shifts is the blurring of the traditional notion that domestic and international policy are separate spheres. Two decades of economic globalization—begun in the 1980s and accelerated under Clinton—have transnationalized ecological as well as economic life in America. Along with the traditional preoccupation with endangered species, conservationists must now grapple with the problem of trade-induced "bioinvasions," in which species hitching a ride on global trade flows are disrupting the stability and functioning of ecosystems. Efforts to deal with local issues of toxic dumping and the siting of hazardous facilities cannot be decoupled from the ongoing struggle to regulate international trafficking in hazardous waste.

As the United States has aggressively promoted trade liberalization, privatization, and a global regulatory climate friendly to

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transnational corporations, its support for effective global environmental governance has dwindled. The United States was the first country to create a national environmental protection agency, produced landmark legislation on clean air and water in the 1970s, and was a leader in the push to protect the ozone layer and stop the trafficking in endangered species. As recently as the administration of Bush the Elder, the U.S. stance was at worst hit-or-miss—supporting stronger global rules on ozone even as it resisted global action on biodiversity at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

Today, in contrast, the U.S. stance varies only in the narrow range from inaction to outright hostility. The American approach to the climate talks is well known: demand concessions and loopholes that gut the possibility of a strong agreement, and then fail to honor even the weaker agreement that results. Less well known is that this has become the standard American negotiating tactic on international environmental treaties, whether the issue is persistent organic pollutants, international trafficking in hazardous waste, or protection of biological diversity. To be sure, other governments North and South are hardly innocents on these matters. But as the world prepares to confront its lack of progress at a follow-up "Rio-plus-10" meeting next year in Johannesburg, South Africa, the United States is more isolated than ever in its anti-environmental stance.

GROWING ALARM over America's official disregard for the health of the planet is hardly limited to progressive environmentalists and techno naysayers. A recent policy forum of the well-heeled Aspen Institute, chaired by former Stanford University president Donald Kennedy, produced a public memorandum to the president pointing to "an array of historic and urgent challenges" because "human actions are radically reshaping the global environment." The report called for aggressive American leadership in promoting global action "to reduce the human footprint on the planet" (although tiptoeing around the delicate matter of America's own outsized ecological footprint). In January, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its starkest warning to date on the possible consequences of global warming. Although Big Energy likes to caricature the IPCC as nothing more than political science, it is in fact a typically cautious body of international scientific officialdom, which, after more than a decade of carefully nudging its risk assessments upward, now regards the climate issue as clearly a question of "how much" and "how bad" rather than "whether."

Signs are mounting that the world is tiring of American obstruction and unilateralism, in the corporate and activist domains as well as in the governmental sphere. Environmentalists outside the United States bemoan the inability of America's environmental movement to sway its own government. ExxonMobil may have the administration's ear on global warming, but its stance of know-nothing opposition leaves it increasingly isolated from its non-American brethren, Shell and British Petroleum. The last set of climate talks, in the Hague last November, fell apart because the European Union for the first time refused to cave in to U.S. pressure. As negotiators prepare for the next round of climate talks (scheduled for Bonn in July), governments in Europe and Japan are forced to at least contemplate the unthinkable—moving forward on a global climate regime that does not include the United States.

For much of the rest of the world, America's unwillingness to lead, follow, or get out of the way on a host of global environmental challenges will come to a head next year in Johannesburg. The Rio-plus-10 conference will examine progress toward the goals set out at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. The conference is unlikely to produce much in the way of governmental action, but it should be an opportunity to puncture the persistent public myth that America is leading the way in the push for global environmental protection.

Rio-plus-10 will also be an opportunity for some much needed bridge-building for American groups mobilizing against the corporate version of globalization. Despite momentum created by the Battle in Seattle, international linkages remain narrow and sometimes tenuous. The American presence was almost nonexistent, for example, at the recent World So-

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cial Forum held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Staged parallel to the Davos World Economic Forum, Porto Alegre brought together thousands of environmentalists, human rights activists, public health advocates, trade unionists, and others in an effort to articulate alternatives to corporate-dominated economic globalization. The event was important enough to earn a full-page rebuttal from the British *Financial Times*, where it was bizarrely caricatured as an homage to Che Guevara. It made barely a ripple in the U.S. media and drew little in the way of American activist participation.

WHETHER IT comes packaged in Bush's mangled syntax or Reagan's folksy delusions, the right's assault on environmental protection is at heart a program to reconfigure the boundary between what is public and what is private—stretching here, contracting there, consistent only in its pursuit of power and profit. Its chief instruments are regulatory rollback, administrative non-enforcement, opening access to the public lands and the public trough, shifting the burden of proof onto those who preach caution, and invoking "market" responses to problems that lie mostly in the failure of markets and the actions of marketers.

This time around, things promise to be more difficult. Many of the traditional channels for achieving environmental protection have frayed, and hyper-globalization pushes downward on both standards and aspirations. Mainstream environmental organizations, liberal Democrats, and America's now sizable environmental-industrial complex are not the chief culprits in this process. But they bear a growing responsibility for allowing it to occur and sometimes even benefiting from it—in fundraising appeals, at the polls, or in the vast sums spent to clean up the mess or ship it somewhere else. They have learned, perhaps too well, how to manage in that Orwellian world where trees cause pollution, where unfettered growth and limitless consumption are sustainable, and where chemical companies are the stewards of nature. Perhaps the greatest opportunity of the second Bush era will be the chance to reclaim the spirit of opposition that has always been part of environmentalism's better nature—in a word, to dissent. ●

KEN CONCA is associate professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland.

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The Other Side of Paradise

Hawai'i's Tourism Plantation

Gordon Lafer

LAST FALL, readers of *Travel & Leisure* magazine named the island of Maui the "World's Best Island." "Surprise, surprise," sighed Condé Nast's editors—this was the fourth year in a row Maui won the title. For the tourists who flock to it from across the globe, Maui represents a tropical paradise where "bliss comes naturally." The island's combination of lush rain forest, stunning mountains, warm sands, and cool breezes is truly remarkable. But tourists come not only to escape cold cities for warm beaches; they also come to escape the pressures of the rat race for a week of Polynesian therapy—to wear leis, to see hula and luau, and to be enveloped in the easygoing nature and warm welcome of island life. As one travel brochure puts it, "from the moment you set foot on these exceptional islands, you are overcome with a feeling of well-being. Everywhere you go, people are smiling and relaxed."

But what is the World's Best Island like for the people who make the beds, cook the meals, and carry the bags—and whose culture is the stuff of others' fantasies? While the local culture may appear idyllic—and is, in fact, warm, informal and easygoing—the work is hard. The cost of living in Hawai'i is almost one-third higher than on the mainland. In the town of Wailuku—Maui's working-class county seat, far from the resorts—the American Friends Service Committee estimates that a single adult with one infant needs to make $18.64 an hour, forty hours a week, fifty-two weeks a year, just to meet basic needs. As a result, many workers live with large extended families sharing a single house, and almost everyone has at least two jobs. It is not uncommon for housekeepers to finish an eight-hour shift at a hotel and then rush off to another four- or even eight-hour job waiting tables, mopping floors, or pumping gas.

This is the contradiction that lies at the heart of the island's economy. From a visitor's viewpoint, Maui is a lush playground, where top suites list for $10,000 a night and the local population offers a welcome respite from the cold realities of life on the mainland. The hotels and travel companies plugging Hawai'i's laid-back beauty are making handsome profits. But behind the scenes, the people who care for the guests, and whose warmth and beauty are featured in hotel advertisements, are struggling to make ends meet. In 2000-2001, this contradiction led to a series of labor demonstrations focused on union contract negotiations. At the center of this gathering storm is the Royal Lahaina Resort, Maui's fifth largest hotel, where Hawai'i's biggest union faced off against the head of the state's largest travel company, Pleasant Hawai'ian Holidays.

The outcome of hotel labor negotiations will affect virtually every family on the island. Maui's economy has seen a transition from traditional Hawai'ian farming to large-scale capitalist agriculture and finally to tourism. The history of the island's development suggests that negotiations taking place over the next few years may prove to be a pivotal turning point for the local economy for decades to come.

Maui is, literally, a converted plantation. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Hawai'i's economy was dominated not by tourism but by the sugar and pineapple plantations that stretched from one end of the islands to the other. The state's "Big Five" companies—founded by the New England whalers and missionaries who first colonized the islands in the 1820s—ran the docks, the stores, the plantations, and the government. Apart from the Yankees and native Hawai'ians, all others in Hawai'i are here because someone

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in their family was brought over to work the sugar fields. The state's diverse population—a unique mix of native Hawai'ian, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and Portuguese—reflects the successive waves of immigrant labor brought to work the fields in what, until the 1950s, was a near-feudal agricultural system.

In the late 1940s, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) staged a series of strikes in the sugar and pineapple fields and finally broke the back of the oligarchy, securing living wages and ending the company town system for tens of thousands of Asian-immigrant field hands. In many cases, Maui's communities owe their physical existence to the success of the ILWU's organizing drives. The island's neighborhoods are still dotted with names such as "Dream City," created when the union forced plantation owners to turn cane fields over for low-cost housing, providing a first-ever chance for workers to own their own houses.

Tourism developed late on Maui. Although the first hotel in Waikiki went up in 1906, it was almost half a century before the industry got rolling on Maui. In the early 1960s, the island's first major resort development was created when Alexander & Baldwin—one of the "Big Five" plantation companies that remains the island's largest landowner—plowed under agricultural land to create the Ka'anapali Resort. In the decades since, sugar production has steadily shrunk, while the number of hotel rooms keeps multiplying.

Today, Maui is an island where a community of just over a hundred thousand people annually hosts twenty times its population in guests. Although the island remains "unspoiled" compared with Honolulu, its economy revolves just as completely around tourism. By the turn of the millennium, fully 80 percent of the island's economy was directly or indirectly dependent on the tourist trade. It is the children and relatives of the sugar workers who are now serving meals, cleaning rooms, and greeting guests in the island's hotels. These are the "warm Polynesians" of travelogue lore.

For much of the past thirty years, labor relations in Hawai'i largely followed the low-key approach that typifies much of the state's business. Following the dramatic victories of organized labor in the late 1940s, the state's primary employers gradually developed smooth relationships with the unions. Although employers' respect for the unions may have been based on the realpolitik of having been beaten in costly strikes, a pattern of cooperative relations developed that often seemed to reflect the easygoing local culture. Hawai'i is the most heavily unionized state in the country, and in some ways its labor relations mirror those of the industrial Northeast and Midwest in the 1970s—when union strength was a fact of life, and employers more or less played along. After an initial strike in the early days of organizing the tourism industry, the ILWU did not see a hotel strike for thirty years. Both labor and management largely assumed that when times were tough, everyone would sacrifice, and when business was booming, everyone would share in the prosperity.

THIS COOPERATIVE mentality was so much the norm that, when the tourism industry hit recession in the early 1990s, ILWU members gave up millions of dollars in negotiated wage increases to help the hotels through hard times. The ILWU estimates that at the Royal Lahaina alone workers gave up nearly a million dollars in wages to help the company survive the downturn. Over the course of the decade, however, tourism has rebounded across the state, and nowhere more vigorously than on Maui, whose hotels are now the most profitable in the state. From a low of 63.4 percent in 1991, Maui hotel occupancy soared to a high of 77.4 percent by the end of the decade. The year 2000 brought continuing increases in both occupancy and room rates. For hoteliers, the key index of profitability is revenue per available room (REVPAR)—defined as the actual amount of money taken in, averaged across all of a hotel's rooms, whether or not they were filled. As of 2000, Maui had by far the highest REVPAR of any island in the state. Indeed, since 1991, Maui hotels have seen REVPAR increase by a stunning 141 percent—many times higher than either the rate of inflation or the pace of wage increases.

But since the industry left the recession behind, it's clear that something changed besides the economy. In the past few years, the

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aggressive anti-unionism so common on the mainland has begun to creep into the Hawai'i hotel industry. Now that business is booming, some of the hotels that benefited from workers' sacrifice in the early 1990s have broken the implicit pact that framed labor relations for three decades. These companies now operate on the premise that even when times are good, workers should be forced to accept the lowest wages and benefits an aggressive management team can impose. This turn has fueled a surge in labor protests across the island.

The particular irony of Maui's hotel industry is that the same hotel owners who have imported slash-and-burn labor tactics are selling themselves to mainland tourists by advertising the warmth and generosity of their workers. This contradiction is nowhere more glaring than in the case of Pleasant Hawai'ian Holidays, the largest travel wholesaler serving the Hawai'i market, whose founders—the Hogan family of California—also own the Royal Lahaina Resort. Pleasant Hawai'ian does not merely sell airline seats or hotel rooms—it sells "Hawai'i." The company's brochure entices visitors with the promise that they will find something in Hawai'i that cannot be found on any other sandy beach: "the culture will fascinate you. The legends will intrigue you. . . . You will be treated as honored guests." Even repeat visitors can expect to "fall in love all over again with these magnificent islands and charming people."

At the heart of what Pleasant Hawai'ian promises vacationers is something both local residents and mainland travel agents refer to as the "aloha spirit." Every hotel on Maui pledges that its workers embody this spirit and that guests will be pampered by its generosity. For hip urbanites visiting the island, it is easy to assume that "aloha spirit" means nothing beyond a cynical marketing ploy, promising service with a smile for tired executives. Of course, this *is* primarily what it means for hotel operators. The surprising fact, however, is that "aloha spirit" is a tangible and meaningful concept for the people who live here. A popular bumper sticker, for instance, urges the public to "Live Aloha," and letters to the editor in the local paper criticize aggressive or unkind behavior as exhibiting a "lack of aloha." In one sense, the hotel companies have landed the perfect workforce. Where service industry executives around the country engage in detailed scripting and intensive attitude adjustments in hopes of crafting a successful customer interaction, Maui's hotels operate with a workforce that regards a certain type of openness and generosity as a staple of its lifestyle. It's for this reason that local hotels sell themselves not by emphasizing the dedication of their particular staff but by trumpeting the virtues of the population as a whole. In a profound sense, local workers are part of the hotel's product.

ALTHOUGH EVERYONE agrees that "aloha spirit" is real, there is sharp disagreement about what it means. For the travel industry it is primarily a marketing strategy, with many hotels writing into workers' terms of employment the requirement to greet guests with a smiling "aloha." For local residents, however, the idea of "aloha spirit" carries a radical edge to it, focused ultimately on notions of fairness, sharing, and mutual respect. In 2000-2001, workers' and managements' ideas of aloha clashed dramatically in a series of battles over labor contracts for hotel employees. Leonard Nakoa, a golf course groundskeeper and union activist whose family has been on Maui for more than a thousand years, explains that "we show the guests aloha by opening our homes and our homeland for them. We don't do this because the hotels tell us to—we do it because this is the Hawai'ian way. But when hotels exploit our land and our families for their own profits—when they are getting rich off our hospitality while refusing to pay us a living wage—that is an abuse of the aloha spirit."

The fight over the meaning of "aloha," and the broader question of what mainland travel companies owe the people whose culture they advertise, was crystallized in the battle at Royal Lahaina. The hotel's owners sell Hawai'i tour packages to more than four hundred thousand tourists per year, and business is booming; after back-to-back record-breaking years in 1998-1999, the company broke in to the New York and Chicago markets in the year 2000, aiming to increase its customer base by 15 percent. The Hogan family itself has grown rich from

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its Hawai'i tourism business, with assets estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars. The family has so much money, in fact, that it has set aside a hundred million dollars for a foundation dedicated to promoting the virtues of the travel industry.

Patriarch Ed Hogan is an outspoken booster of the benefits his business brings to the world. "We in the travel industry are the peacemakers of today," he proclaims. "By helping travelers experience and understand other cultures through travel and tourism, we help to create 'peace through commerce.'" Hogan has characterized his wholesale business as "taking care of the people of Hawai'i," and touts "the positive effects this great industry has on the world and its people."

But Hogan's treatment of the "charming people" employed at his own hotel shows another face of the industry. Royal Lahaina employees are subject to stricter work requirements than nearby hotels—for instance, where other hotels require housekeepers to clean only fourteen rooms per day, Royal Lahaina's staff is required routinely to clean sixteen rooms. Despite the increased workload, in the year 2000 the Hogans paid up to $3,000 a year less than neighboring hotels for equivalent job classifications, and charged employees hundreds of dollars a year more for health insurance. Of the hotel's fifty-nine job classifications, only two paid as much as the American Friends Service Committee estimates a single mother and infant need to live on. Housekeepers—the single largest group of employees and overwhelmingly female—made only 60 percent of the subsistence wage. Indeed, it was possible to work full time at the Royal Lahaina and still qualify for food stamps. "A lot of us have been working at the hotel for twenty years or more," states Royal Lahaina cook Joni Cabacungan. "We are the ones who make this hotel work. . .and most of us are still working two jobs to make ends meet." Finally, the company unilaterally suspended contributions to the employee pension fund, despite having signed a contract promising to contribute. For a year and a half, employees who retired from the hotel left with decreased benefits. Finally, the pension fund's trustees restored benefits for Royal Lahaina employees—out of the fund's general revenues and the contributions of other hotels—but the Hogans have never reimbursed the lost contributions.

Over the past year, many in the local community expressed anger at the image of mainland travel executives grown rich from peddling the image of "charming" Hawai'ians while holding down wages even in times of plenty. In this way, the labor policies at Royal Lahaina epitomized the essence of what had gone wrong in the island's premier industry. Over a thousand Maui citizens—including U.S. Representative Patsy Mink and Maui County Mayor James Apana—signed petitions accusing Hogan of an "abuse of the aloha spirit."

After years of putting up with substandard conditions, Royal Lahaina workers seemed to boil over in anger during the past year. "It's just unfair," explained cashier Jiuna Ulep. "We have the lowest pay and we do the same work as the other hotels. . . . We work hard to take care of the guests. It's not right that the Hogans should get so rich and still pay their local Hawai'i workers such low wages." While negotiations were underway, Royal Lahaina employees staged a series of marches through West Maui's premier resort area and put up loud picket lines in front of the hotel entrance and along the beachfront. Guests who gathered to watch picture-perfect sunsets over the Pacific found themselves engaged by union chants and giant puppets marching down the beach. Inside the hotel, workers wore buttons, signed petitions, and filed grievances in record numbers.

For hotel employees, negotiations were only half the problem; the other half was what appeared to be a widespread pattern of withheld wages and contract violations. Hotel managers admitted to having systematically withheld overtime payments for employees who work back-to-back shifts. This concession—representing thousands of dollars of unpaid wages—came only after months of stonewalling and denials. For two months, the hotel refused to provide the payroll records needed to determine whether or not wages had been properly paid. On the eve of a grievance hearing, the hotel provided records for just one week, in-

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sisting that if employees could not identify contract violations in that week's records, the claim would be rejected. In fact, the union identified more than twenty-five separate contract violations in that one week's worth of records; based on this information, the union estimates that Royal Lahaina owes upward of $100,000 in unpaid wages. Even after this revelation, the hotel demanded that the union pay thousands of dollars to have payroll records produced—essentially asking employees to pay the costs for correcting the hotel's withholding of earned wages—and ultimately simply refused to provide records for most of the period in question. Over the past several months, Royal Lahaina employees have won cases charging that the hotel illegally extended workers' "probation" wage period, refused to provide earned vacation benefits, assigned employees to higher-paying duties without paying the appropriate wage, and repeatedly violated seniority rights in setting work schedules.

IN THE LOBBY of the Royal Lahaina's human resources office hangs a watercolor painting of a faceless dark-skinned worker stooped over in a field of sugar cane. Perhaps meant to recall the lost intimacy of plantation life, or perhaps intended to remind employees that they are only one generation away from stoop labor, the picture seems a peculiar choice—harking back, above all, to an era when management ruled with a free and iron hand. If this recollection of bygone labor repression is intended to discourage uppityness, it doesn't seem to be working. During the past year, more than a hundred employees have walked past this painting to file grievances, including class action complaints seeking years worth of unpaid wages. The combination of contract violations inside and substandard proposals at the negotiating table fueled protests of increasing intensity. In February, Royal Lahaina became the site of the first ILWU hotel strike since 1970, when workers walked off the job in protest over the hotel's violation of federal labor law. Throughout February and March, picket lines became part of the Maui experience for tourists visiting the hotel. The workers also received critical support from the mainland, where labor federations in California and Oregon voted to initiate a boycott of Pleasant Hawai'ian Holidays until the owners signed a contract with Royal Lahaina employees. Even travel agents started getting on the bandwagon, with more than twenty agencies signing a pledge that they would not use Pleasant Hawai'ian for their clients so long as the labor dispute was unresolved. Finally, at the end of March, the company gave in. After ten months of fighting and two strikes, Royal Lahaina employees won a contract that includes a 16 percent wage increase over two and a half years, a 50 percent increase in tips for waiters, and resumption of pension contributions. The wage increases will, by the end of the contract period, bring Royal Lahaina close to parity with industry leaders. This is a big victory for the employees, and also suggests the hope that, by pulling up the floor of the industry, the fight at Royal Lahaina may have helped raise—or at least protect—standards for workers across the industry.

The victory at Royal Lahaina is a sweet one, both for employees and for the ILWU as a whole. But everyone knows it's only a beginning: seven more hotels have contract negotiations scheduled this year alone. As the drama unfolds, hotel workers may rally around their own definition of "aloha spirit." In the words of a union poster popular on picket lines this year, " 'Aloha' Means 'Share The Wealth.' " ●

GORDON LAFER is an assistant professor at the University of Oregon's Labor Education and Research Center and is author of the forthcoming *Let Them Eat Training: The Political Success and Economic Failure of Job Training Policy Since 1980* (Cornell, 2002). He is currently on leave conducting research for ILWU Local 142 on Maui. An annotated version of this article can be found at the *Dissent* Web site (www.dissentmagazine.org).

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Beyond the Myths of Seattle

David Morse

A FEW THINGS are finally clear about the demonstrations against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle in 1999. First, Seattle is the international benchmark by which protests against corporately managed global trade are now judged. From Davos, Switzerland, to Prague and Quebec—even in the dusty market town of Millau, France, where peasant activist José Bové was brought to trial for trashing a McDonald's—authorities expressed relief that their cities had not turned into "another Seattle."

Second, it is clear that "Seattle" never happened. Or at least the version painted in the U.S. media and exported abroad is so different from what actually took place as to provide quite another benchmark, one that measures the capacity of the media monopolies to create a virtual reality with little attention to the facts.

Now, more than a year after Seattle's shattered windows have been replaced, the residue of graffiti power-washed from storefronts, and the last rubber bullets carried down the storm sewers into Puget Sound, it is time to take a fresh look at the way the original event was distorted, and with what effects, on both sides of the political divide.

In the early euphoria, activists made much of the "lessons" learned from Seattle. Among the lessons was a familiar one: the media are attracted to violence; a handful of vandals can bring camera eyes swiveling to attention. But as the "spirit of Seattle" came up against hardened police responses in Washington D.C. and in a string of other cities last year, the lessons became more complicated. Organizers learned, and are still learning, the tactical limitations as well as the strengths of large-scale nonviolent demonstrations and decentralized decision-making.

The police, meanwhile, were learning a different set of lessons. Seattle police sent videotapes of their city's chaos to frighten authorities in Detroit prior to the June 2000 meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) across the river in Windsor, Ontario. Seattle was invoked repeatedly to justify unconstitutional crackdowns on protesters outside the Republican National Convention a month later in Philadelphia.

Fueled by images of Seattle violence, the abuse of First Amendment rights in the context of mass protests has become routine. In reaction to the initial slowness of Seattle police to make arrests, Washington, D.C., police in April 2000 launched preemptive strikes against organizers' headquarters, seizing giant puppets and thereby denying protesters one of their most potent visual tools. In reaction to Seattle police complaints about the thinness of their forces, police elsewhere were mustered in massive numbers. In response to television coverage of Seattle police rampaging out of control, law officers elsewhere waited for provocation,[1] even as rubber bullets, tear gas, and pepper spray became the standard approach to crowd control.

Imposition of martial law within designated zones has become commonplace, beginning with D.C. police, who, in concert with federal law enforcement agencies, adopted a more sophisticated version of Seattle's "no protest zone." Detroit and Philadelphia followed suit with their own militarized zones. By the time the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) held its summit this past April, no one was surprised when Quebec authorities used "Seattle" as justification for sealing off the entire old section of the city with a four-meter-high chain-link fence and requiring residents to show special IDs.

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To what extent are these repressive steps warranted by actual or probable acts of violence? The question must be addressed by protesters, as well as by civil authorities.

First, however, we should examine the origins of the widespread public perception of the Seattle protest as violent, despite a solid body of facts to the contrary. Although the media distorted the original event almost beyond recognition, it is also true that they were fed inflammatory and largely unfounded statements by the badly outnumbered and disorganized Seattle police while the event was still unfolding. An obviously rattled assistant police chief, Ed Joiner, declared at a press conference, "These were not peaceful protesters. These were rioters trying to take over the streets of Seattle." Joiner's comment set the tone for the months that followed.

No comparable excuse can be offered for the misinformation circulated by police elsewhere. The "Molotov cocktail" cited by D.C. police as a pretext for seizing protesters' headquarters turned out to be bogus—a plastic bottle containing paint thinner for puppet-making, just as the alleged "pepper-spray factory" turned out to be a communal kitchen.

Philadelphia police set up a display of photographs and objects supposedly used by demonstrators in Seattle. The most bizarre item was a chain said to have been tied with gasoline-soaked rags. Police claimed it was "similar to the ones used by protesters in Seattle to light on fire and fling over a large crowd." This was a complete fabrication. No such devices were reported in Seattle.

A catalyst in the police overreaction was the Washington, D.C.-based Maldon Institute, a little-known but well-funded right-wing group with FBI connections and pipelines into many police departments. Bankrolled by Pittsburgh billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife, the Maldon Institute provided intelligence about the demonstrators that included "scurrilous, McCarthyite allegations," according to Chip Berlet, who monitors the Institute's activities.[2] Acting largely on these allegations, Philadelphia police crushed giant puppets in trash compactors, and prosecutors authorized preemptive arrests on the patently illegal grounds that leaders of nonviolent actions could be held responsible for vandalism committed by others. Ruckus Society leader John Sellers, who trains protesters to engage in flamboyant but physically harmless acts such as unfurling giant banners from buildings, was jailed for possessing such "instruments of crime" as a cell phone and a hand-held computer and held for several days on a million-dollar bail. The charges were later thrown out.

What are the implications of the new police tactics in terms of constitutional rights?[3] That question has scarcely been addressed by the media. The immediate impact—obvious to demonstrators, but not so obvious to television viewers, and hugely important in shaping public perceptions—is to curtail the ability of nonviolent protesters to make their voices heard at a particular demonstration. But the indirect impact goes further. The militarized responses of civil authorities effectively criminalize political protest in the form of mass demonstrations. "Seattle" has become a code word by which civil discourse can be polarized and the argument against unrestricted global trade "delegitimatized"—to use a term bandied about by corporate nongovernmental organizations.

Yes, of course, the corporate media are complicit. Not only have these issues gone unexamined by the national press, but considering the impact of the original protest in Seattle, the media have shown little interest in discerning what actually took place. For all these reasons, and because the expectation of "Seattle-like" violence has inured the public to routine violations of civil liberties, recent efforts in Seattle to figure out what happened a year and a half ago are particularly welcome. Four separate reports released since July 2000 attempt to ascertain the facts, assign blame, and offer recommendations.

The facts are particularly useful, considering the extent to which the media have disregarded them. To cite a flagrant example: in a June 4, 2000 *New York Times* article about the preparations in Detroit for the OAS demonstrators, reporter Nichole M. Christian presented as fact the following statement about Seattle: "In that protest demonstrators, some wearing gas masks, hurled Molotov cocktails, rocks, and excrement at delegates and police officers." The *Times* issued a correction. Only

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the part about the gas masks was true. But this is just one example. How pervasive this demonization is can be seen in results of a Google search keyed to "Seattle riots." In December 2000, the search turned up 10,400 references (by contrast, "Seattle police riot," arguably a more accurate description, produced only 445 references). Two months later, in February 2001, the number of references in response to "Seattle riots" had jumped to 16,500. And by April 2001, the number had nearly doubled, to 31,400. Although this may speak to skewed feedback in the Internet, it also reflects the mythology that has grown up around Seattle.

So what did happen? The studies reveal quite a different Seattle from the one that has blossomed in the public imagination. Particularly helpful is an eight-three-page report released last July by the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington state, entitled *Out of Control: Seattle's Flawed Response to Protests Against the World Trade Organization* (available on-line at www.aclu-wa.org). The ACLU report sketches the timeline of events, cites specific police abuses, reveals the extent to which the demonstrators' constitutional rights were violated, and proposes remedies for the future.

A second report was issued in September 2000 by the city's official fact-finding committee, the WTO Accountability Review Committee. The ARC report, which took nine months and cost the city $190,000, concluded that the city government "failed its citizens through careless and naive planning, poor communication of its plans and procedures, confused and indecisive police leadership, and imposition of civil emergency measures in questionable ways" (on-line at www.ci.seattle.wa.us/seattle/wtocommittee/currentdocs.htm).

A third report, issued by an ad hoc citizens' group known as the Committee for Local Government Accountability (available on-line at http://ourworld.cs.com/_ht_a/Johns4peace/clga_report.htm), criticizes the ARC for not going far enough and questions the degree of involvement by city officials in what was supposed to be an independent citizens' review. "Basically the city was investigating itself," observes Mark Taylor-Canfield, a founding member of CLGA.

The charge of conflict of interest appears well founded. Councilmember Jim Compton, who led the ARC investigation, also heads the committee that oversees the Seattle Police Department. At the outset he set strict limits on the ARC inquiry, ruling out any criminal investigation and promising "closure" rather than a "quagmire." Compton, quoted in the *Seattle Times* in January 2000, assured Seattleites that "If an investigation means Watergate, this is not an investigation." When the Seattle Police Department refused to turn over certain documents to the ARC, the committee did not exercise its power of subpoena, nor did it disclose to the public which documents were withheld.

A fourth report, entitled "Waging War on Dissent," published by the Seattle National Lawyers Guild WTO Legal Group, was released in July and later updated (available online at www.nlgseattle.org or by mail at P.O. Box 95242, Seattle, WA 98145). Paul Richmond and colleagues pursue a more radical thesis, arguing that the Seattle debacle stemmed directly from "attempting to create a world where the corporations have unlimited powers . . . where the most basic protections on health, safety, environment, workers rights, quality of life, can be removed as 'barriers to free trade.' "

Whatever gaps remain in the factual record, all four reports, representing a diverse range of views—together with an investigative article in the *Seattle Weekly* published August 3-9, 2000—agree on some basics. All assign blame to the city's administration and its international trade boosters in the business community. Although many questions remain unanswered, the following facts are clear.

First, the 40,000 to 50,000 demonstrators who gathered November 30, 1999, were overwhelmingly peaceful. A core of 3,500 to 4,000 protesters engaged in classic civil disobedience. The vandals who seized headlines numbered fewer than two hundred, less than one-half of one percent of the total crowd.

Second, police attacks began *before* the incidents of vandalism and were aimed not at vandals but at nonviolent protesters. The reports confirm that there were no "riots" in Se-

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attle, apart from what may reasonably be described as police riots. Police on two occasions invaded the Capitol Hill residential neighborhood, attacking protesters and residents indiscriminately with batons, tear gas, pepper spray and CS gas, concussion grenades, and assorted "less-lethal" weapons.

Third, the civil rights of the protesters were violated—First Amendment rights most obviously, but also Fourth and Fifth Amendment rights, concerning search and seizure, and due process. From numerous accounts by those arrested, it is clear that the Sixth Amendment—guaranteeing the right of the accused to be informed of charges, confront witnesses, and have legal counsel—was violated as well. Finally, the Eighth Amendment right, prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment, was violated. Prisoners were pepper-sprayed while in close confinement, beaten, denied food, water, and medication, and kept in handcuffs for forty-eight hours or longer before even being informed of the charges.

In short, the facts solidly refute the myth of "violent protests" in Seattle. The questions raised for the future are national and international in scope. What does it mean that Seattle—virtual flagship of the Internet economy, company town of Bill Gates, frontrunner in global trade, a city renowned for the yuppie wealth that percolates through its coffee houses—lapsed so easily into a militarized response that abrogates the rule of law?

What does it mean that other cities followed its example?

Police misbehavior is a manifestation of a broader failure of civil society. Ultimate responsibility lies with elected officials. But as long as municipal authorities work in secret, deny responsibility, withhold documents—as they did and continue to do in Seattle—there can be no transparency or accountability. The problem is both local and pandemic. If city officials around the country are repressing political dissent, then it is more than a local problem; it is an attack on the larger structure of democracy. And if the militarized police response is being encouraged tacitly by an increasingly monolithic media, then the "press" as it is now constituted serves not to guarantee free speech, but to suppress it.

Looking back on Seattle, we can see that the 1999 anti-WTO protest was in some sense hijacked not once, but twice, by proponents of violence: once by the tiny group of anarchists and vandals whose window-breaking grabbed the attention of the news media; and later, over time, by the media themselves.

The images that erupted from Seattle "worked" in the short run, insofar as they elicited some sympathy for the protesters and their cause. The American viewing public opened its eyes a little to issues of global trade. But Seattle was a prescription for future violence. What recourse remains open to demonstrators, when their photogenic giant puppets have been confiscated and they are prevented from getting anywhere near the targets of their protest? The situation invites protesters to push the envelope—overturning cars in Prague, crashing through the fence at Quebec—which in turn is used by the authorities to justify police crackdowns. Police, media, and vandals—including any agents provocateurs and terrorists, real or imagined—can be expected to collude in this self-perpetuating cycle.

FINALLY THE question comes around to the organizers of nonviolent demonstrations. To what extent is police violence warranted, in the eyes of the public? What is to prevent future large nonviolent demonstrations from being hijacked—or "parasitized," as some in the movement call it[4]—by Black Bloc anarchists, Revolutionary Communist Party activists, and others who, either programmatically or opportunistically, engage in destruction of property or violence?

Historically, nonviolent protest involving civil disobedience on the scale mounted by Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., has depended on spiritual unity and a coherent leadership. It succeeds on the strength of its moral authority. That authority is compromised once individuals engage in unpredictable hit-and-run tactics. And as a strategic matter, the likelihood of violence reduces the participation of moderate groups such as labor unions–and also individuals who are physically vulnerable. Predictability is part of transparency.

The problem has no easy solution. This is

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a movement that prides itself on the absence of charismatic leaders or top-down organization. And as Naomi Klein observed, following the Quebec protest, "the traditional institutions that once organized citizens into neat, structured groups are all in decline: unions, religions, political parties." She goes on to say that "something propelled tens of thousands of individuals to the streets anyway, an intuition, a gut instinct—perhaps just the profoundly human desire to be part of something larger than oneself" (*Toronto Globe and Mail*, April 24, 2001).

But writing off labor and religious groups seems premature at best, and skeptics among us wonder how far to trust "gut instinct" as a basis for mass protest. One solution seems painfully obvious to those of us who battled police in the pre-Internet sixties and seventies. If large demonstrations are going to preserve their nonviolent character, then the organizational process has to achieve more clarity around the issue of self-policing. Nonviolent protesters are going to have to be militant enough to confront, physically if necessary, those at the fringes who want to throw stones. But the confrontation has not yet happened intellectually, at the organizational level, in the present movement; it has been avoided rather than resolved. Organizers of the Quebec demonstrations skirted the issue by designating "safe" and "risky" zones. Even to achieve clarity on the issue of self-policing is anathema to the loose, quasi-consensual, Internet-supported process that brought 350 organizations to Seattle and that continues to organize on the model of interlocking "hubs" and "spokes." This lack of clarity, typical of the anarchist style that prevailed in Seattle and elsewhere, remains a stumbling block to attempts to make common cause with unions and other groups who want to be comfortable with their allies.

Another alternative is to abandon large-scale demonstrations in favor of smaller, more local gatherings—as happened with Quebec, when scores of smaller demonstrations took place simultaneously in other cities and at border crossings. Juliette Beck, who organizes for Global Exchange, sees the smaller gatherings as more conducive to forging alliances between local concerns and global issues. "It's a long-term process of trust-building," she says, emphasizing the need to build links with the working class and people of color. "We're all eating toxic food and breathing the same toxic air." But she also wants to keep the dialogue open with Black Bloc and others who want to use property destruction as a form of protest. She acknowledges she is walking a fine line.[5]

This is a delicate moment, a time when creative leadership may give rise to something completely unexpected.

If we have learned anything from the recent presidential election it is that civic culture must be revitalized from the ground up, beginning with voting rights and proceeding to campaign finance reform and to legislative measures to break the power of the media monopolies. Perhaps what we have learned from Seattle, most ironically, is the need for transparency—not just in global institutions and in government, both national and local, but in our own structures of dissent. ●

DAVID MORSE is a journalist and author of a novel, *The Iron Bridge*. He writes about global issues and human rights, and may be contacted at his Web site (www.david-morse.com).

1. Los Angeles police were the most obvious exception; during the National Democratic Convention in June 2000, they used rubber bullets and tear gas to attack a crowd of outdoor-concert attendees outside the convention hall, apparently on the grounds that they looked unruly.

2. Berlet is senior analyst for Political Research Associates, based in Massachusetts. These remarks appeared in an interview with Craig R. McCoy and Linda K. Harris in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 10, 2000.

3. The new, less-lethal weapons available to police, as well as militarized tactics coupled with coordination with National Guard forces and intelligence agencies, arguably have the further effect of distancing police from civil society and weakening the protections contained in the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 designed to prevent federal troops from being used to police civil society.

4. This term actually seems more accurate, because the smaller groups advocating violence do not take over leadership or direction of the larger group but depend on the nonviolent commitment of their hosts and draw sustenance from them to promote their own agendas.

5. Telephone interview, April 25, 2001.

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Savaging Presidents

Nicolaus Mills

As he accepted the 1996 Republican presidential nomination, Bob Dole, one of the Senate's toughest infighters for more than a decade, cautioned his supporters that President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore were "opponents, not enemies." Dole's words of caution made for a great sound bite on the evening news, but in the context of the 1990s, when campaign bumper stickers asking, "Where is Lee Harvey Oswald when his country needs him?" barely drew a protest from voters, Dole's plea did not, as he knew, have a chance of success. In a decade of attack ads and negative campaigning, real political power was firmly in the hands of those who, in the words of veteran Republican consultant Ed Rollins, believed their job was "to diminish the reputation of the other side."

We make a mistake, however, if we look back on the 1990s and think that the savaging of President Clinton was unprecedented. Some of the mechanisms—notably the Internet and the Office of the Independent Counsel—that made it easy to attack Clinton were recent historical developments. But long before the Internet, the Independent Counsel, and the negative campaign ad, we savaged our presidents with gibes, caricature, and invective. Since the end of the eighteenth century, it is a fate that no president, no matter how successful his administration, has been completely able to avoid.

In the wake of his Farewell Address, George Washington was labeled by the opposition press as "the source of all the misfortunes of our country," a man who "cankered the principles of republicanism." Abraham Lincoln, while in office, was described as a "half-witted usurper" and a "mole-eyed" monster. On the eve of the Second World War, Franklin Roosevelt was compared to Hitler.

Even more telling, those trashing the president have not just been political hacks or partisan editors; they have often been among the brightest and most respected figures of their day. It was the revolutionary writer Tom Paine, who, in an open letter in the *Aurora*, celebrated Washington's retirement by praying for his death and calling him an "impostor." It was the Reverend Timothy Dwight, the president of Yale, who observed of Thomas Jefferson that his administration promised an age in which, "We may see our wives and daughters the victims of legal prostitution, soberly dishonored, speciously polluted." It was aviation hero Charles Lindbergh who told a Madison Square Garden audience that in the 1940 election Americans had as much free choice over foreign affairs "as the Germans would have been given if Hitler had run against Göring."

Indeed, the real problem in describing the kind of savaging of the president that has been going on in America for the last two hundred-odd years stems from the degree to which political savaging is often so sweepingly defined that it is equated with satire or harsh criticism. Much more useful, if we want to get at the core of what savaging the president reveals about American political life, is a narrower definition, which sees savaging as an attempt to humiliate rather than an effort to poke fun or argue. Savaging may be driven by a variety of additional factors—partisanship, personal hate, opposition to a policy—that complicate it. It remains savaging, however, so long as its principal aim is the humiliation of the president. The classic case of political savagery in American politics took place in 1856, when Congressman Preston Brooks of South Carolina attacked Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, a leading abolitionist, and nearly beat

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him to death with his cane. There is a similar desire to degrade that lies behind the savaging of the president.

In recent times we have seen the difference between what is and is not savaging revealed in the contrast between the harsh criticism that Connecticut senator Joseph Lieberman directed against President Clinton for his "immoral" behavior with Monica Lewinsky and the prurient narrative that filled Independent Counsel Ken Starr's report to Congress. The examples from earlier centuries are just as striking. Even the staunchest Federalist would not call the descriptions of John Adams as "His Rotundity" and the "Duke of Braintree" more than satirical attacks on Adams's conservatism. There is, on the other hand, no mistaking the venom in the 1868 attack on Andrew Johnson during his impeachment by an Indiana Congressman who declared, "I am in favor of the official death of Andrew Johnson. I am not surprised that one who began his presidential career in drunkenness should end it in crime."

When we define the savaging of the president as the effort to diminish his status by humiliating him, what changes immediately is our notion that the current attacks on the president reflect a continuum that has only gotten cruder over time. A history of the savaging of the president reveals not a continuum so much as a series of zigzags. The assault on President Clinton by Paula Jones's lawyers, who, in an effort to embarrass the president and make their client seem truthful, claimed that Jones could identify "distinguishing characteristics" of the president's penis—namely, that it was "crooked"—certainly constitutes a political low point, but it is hard to see Jones's legal attack or the perpetuation of it by both radio talk-show host Don Imus and the *Washington Times* as worse than the sexual savaging of Thomas Jefferson while he was in office.

In 1802, when Jefferson's political enemy James Callendar wrote in the *Richmond Recorder* about Jefferson's sexual involvement with his slave Sally Hemings, his sole purpose was to hold Jefferson up to ridicule, not seriously explore the question of miscegenation or abuse by slaveholders. Callendar went out of his way to demean Hemings, calling her a "slut as common as the pavement" and describing her children as a "litter," before going on to observe that Jefferson sent to the "pigstye" for Hemings when he wanted her company. Callendar, who referred to Hemings's son who was said to look like Jefferson as "our little mulatto president," was, however, far from alone in heaping abuse on Jefferson for his sexual conduct. Still cruder was the Jefferson-inspired pornographic verse, which Callendar happily printed in his paper, that led drinking men at the start of the nineteenth century to sing: "A lass so luscious ne'er was seen/As Monticello Sally/Yankee Doodle, who's the noodle/What wife was half so handy?/To breed a flock of slaves for stock/A blackamoor's a dandy."

When it comes to the savaging of the president, we are certainly no more under the sway of the media than our ancestors were. The twenty-four-hour news cycle has made attacks on the president more incessant than they ever were and guaranteed the success of gotcha politics, but from Washington's time on, the savaging of the president has not fallen into a pattern in which we can say the media determined the message. What has happened has been far more modest. Those trashing the president have simply learned to accommodate themselves to whatever delivery systems served their purposes. Over the last eighty years, the changes in these systems have been dramatic. It was radio in the 1930s that gave the enemies of Franklin Roosevelt, such as the radio priest Father Charles Coughlin and Louisiana senator Huey Long, the chance to lash out at the president and be heard by millions. It was television in the 1960s that gave Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam War opponents the opportunity for street theater in which they portrayed Johnson as a murderer and asked, "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?" And it was the Internet in the 1990s that gave Bill Clinton's enemies a vehicle for spreading the rumor that the president had fathered an illegitimate child.

When we go back to the nineteenth century and look at the way newspapers developed, we see that they, too, gave those savaging the president a vehicle for reaching voters that

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changed over the decades. The intensely personal attacks on Jefferson were helped by the fact that the papers of his day, which had jumped from a total of ninety in 1789 to nearly two hundred in 1800, were controlled by political parties and expected to be fiercely partisan. The brutal treatment of Abraham Lincoln—a "joke" the powerful *New York Herald* once called him in a headline—was helped by the rise of large-circulation daily papers led by editors who commanded a broad readership. The ridicule heaped upon Lincoln's successors, Andrew Johnson and Ulysses Grant, was helped by the flourishing of the illustrated weekly and the damage that could be done by a political cartoonist like Thomas Nast, whose drawings, like today's television attack ads, created an immediate impression and allowed him to declare, "I try to hit the enemy between the eyes and knock him down." Later in the century, the scorn heaped upon Grover Cleveland for fathering a child out of wedlock was helped by the growth in newspaper circulation (from 2,800,000 in 1870 to 24,200,000 by 1899) and the corresponding emergence of a readership fascinated both by muckraking and the human-interest story.

DURING THEIR time in office and later in their letters and memoirs, our presidents have voiced complaints about the savaging they received. Although experienced politicians and public figures by the time they reached the White House, none found it easy to ignore the attacks he was forced to endure while leading the country. A stoic president like George Washington tried to be above it all. "These attacks, unjust and unpleasant as they are, will occasion no change in my conduct; nor will they work any other effect in my mind," he wrote in 1796. "Malignity therefore may dart her shafts." But far more common on the part of Washington's successors was open acknowledgment that the savaging hurt, even if one had the compensation of being the most powerful elected official in the nation. "My Reputation has been so much the Sport of the public for fifty years and will be with Posterity, that I hoped it a bubble, a Gossameur that idles in the Wanton Summer Air," John Adams wrote Thomas Jefferson years after both had left office. "The whole object of the coalition is to calumniate me," Andrew Jackson complained of his opponents. "Mrs. J. is not spared, and my pious Mother, nearly fifty years in the tomb . . . has been dragged forth by Hammond and held to public scorn as a prostitute who intermarried with a Negro." Believing he was "the subject of abuse and slander scarcely ever equaled in political history," Ulysses Grant was outspoken on the pain it caused him. "I never wanted to get out of a place," he declared, "as much as I did to get out of the Presidency."

It is easy to see why our presidents have raised such objections to the savaging they received while in office. The savaging has often been personally brutal, and even when unjustified, it has made governance difficult. It frequently distracted voters from the crucial issues of the day, and it put pressure on presidents who did not want to see their reputations besmirched to try to humiliate their attackers. In the struggle for public opinion a president engaged in verbal battle with those who had savaged him could quickly be brought down to their level. Harry Truman was sufficiently angered by the *Chicago Tribune*'s calling him a crook that he asked his attorney general, J. Howard McGrath, to file a libel suit against the paper; and in his speeches and letters, Truman was just as combative. He publicly referred to the syndicated columnist Drew Pearson as an SOB, and, in a letter to Senator William Benton, he described two of the Washington papers that had been hardest on him as "the snotty little news" and a "sabotage sheet."

The paradox is that although the savaging of the president has taken a political toll on the country, it does not follow that we would be better off if it never happened. A history of the savaging of the president is not history from the sewer up. In his influential 1996 *Nation* essay, "Seduced by Civility," the social critic Benjamin DeMott, defending the value of irreverence, argued that too much civility can give us a false sense of comfort and mask deep social conflict. DeMott's warning is one that directly applies to the savaging of the president. From the start, John Kennedy received very easy treatment from reporters and critics, and it is not at all clear that their deference to him or their reluctance to explore his private life

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benefited the nation. Kennedy's recklessness, particularly during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, when America and the Soviet Union came close to nuclear war, was certainly helped by his sense that he could get away with anything. A similar point holds for Ronald Reagan. For much of his time in office, Reagan was the "Teflon president," who was constantly given the benefit of the doubt and who never got stuck with the criticism of his administration. It was a situation that gave him a false sense of security, and the result was that Reagan was able to avoid paying a price for his failures until the Iran-Contra scandal of 1986 put his administration in jeopardy.

THE TRADITION of savaging the powerful has long and honorable roots in American politics, beginning with the revolution and the savaging of King George III and his ministers. The savaging of the British reflected the colonists' growing hatred of arbitrary power, but it also marked the start of a tradition in which political freedom in America was inseparable from free expression at its most extreme. In the case of presidents, the value of this tradition of savaging has been its deflationary and subversive power. It has helped make grandiosity impossible in our leaders, and more recently, when we are threatened by packaged and over-managed presidents, savaging has made it difficult for a president to keep the public at arm's length. The investigation of the Watergate scandal, which led to the resignation of Richard Nixon, was helped by Nixon's unpopularity and the trashing of him by the left, both earlier in his career and during his first presidential term.

That as voters we often pay attention to those who do the most colorful savaging means that a questionable journalist, such as Matt Drudge, can get attention he would otherwise be denied. It is the kind of problem that James Madison worried about in Federalist 63 when he warned of the people being "misled by the artful misrepresentations of interested men." But the other side of the coin is that savaging creates an opportunity for those who are relatively powerless and who lack easy access to the media to have their voices heard.

When the savaging of a president does hit home, it exposes issues in a way that would not happen if we stayed within the bounds of conventional political discourse. In such cases savaging provides insight into our anxieties. The attacks on Thomas Jefferson for having sexual relations with Sally Hemings were designed to shame Jefferson. But they also raised very serious questions that voters were not prepared to confront openly: How was America to deal with the children of white plantation owners and slaves? What would happen if slavery were ended and former slaves became full-fledged citizens? The same kind of anxiety may be seen in the attacks launched in the 1880s on President Grover Cleveland for having had a child out of wedlock. The assaults on the shy and somewhat pompous Cleveland—especially the cartoon that showed a fat man being pursued by a woman with a wailing baby yelling, "Ma, Ma. Where's My Pa?"—were designed to humiliate him. But here, too, the assaults raised serious questions that the country was unprepared to deal with: In a Gilded Age society in which an increasing number of young women were leaving the farm to live in the city, what would happen to sexual standards? Who would care for these women if they got pregnant before they married?

If we treat the savaging of the president as simply a blot on our political landscape, we lose sight of these complexities. We also assume that savaging a president invariably succeeds, when in fact it can backfire, especially if it runs counter to popular opinion. Tom Paine's attack on George Washington made Paine the target of critics who labeled him a "sot and infidel" and compared him to a "reptile infusing its venom into the Atlantic." Paine's reputation never recovered. Two centuries later, in the 1992 South Carolina Republican primary, conservative Pat Buchanan experienced a similar rebuke when he ran a highly graphic ad accusing the Bush administration of using taxes to support "pornographic and blasphemous" art. The ad created a backlash of disgust, and in one of the most conservative states in the nation, swung voters to President Bush.

In the long run, our most resourceful presidents have been able to turn their savaging into a plus. In 1998, the savaging of President Clinton for his relationship with Monica

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Lewinsky led to a jump in Clinton's political standing, lifting his approval rating to 61 percent, seventeen points higher than it had been two weeks earlier, before the Lewinsky allegations became public. Looking back to a time when we did not keep such precise track of a president's popularity, we see the same phenomenon at work. "I welcome their hatred," Franklin Roosevelt said of those who accused him of being a traitor to his class. And when it came to the anti-Semitism of his day, the aristocratic Roosevelt knew exactly what to do. Instead of running from the charge that he was secretly a Jew, Roosevelt declared that he could only trace his family ancestors back to 1649. "In the distant past, they may have been Jews," he happily told the press.

THEN, AS NOW, the lesson remains the same. A president cannot expect to be immune from savaging. The real question, barring exceptional luck, is when it will come and if at that time he finds a way to govern the country without being crippled by the trashing of his character and judgment.

Indeed, for our presidents, the ability to withstand savaging has in practice turned out to be still another test of character. As individuals we may be repelled by the savaging of a president and, as a consequence, feel great doubts about leaving private life to run for office, but as voters we have during the course of the last two centuries assumed presidential savaging was inseparable from American democracy. We have even recorded our highest electoral turnouts—75 percent or more from 1880 to 1892—in years when the political savaging was particularly vicious and its targets were presidents and presidential candidates who were not strong leaders. Today, when voter turnout is low, it is no surprise that so many in the media seek to link voter apathy to negative campaigning, despite mixed polling data supporting this connection. An easy target is always comforting. What such anxiety overlooks is, however, both revealing and encouraging: it is the capacity of the electorate to see through presidential savaging that lacks merit, even when the president being savaged does not have a great claim on our sympathy. ●

NICOLAUS MILLS is currently at work on a history of the savaging of the president. His most recent book is *The Triumph of Meanness: America's War Against Its Better Self*.

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Color Bind

Prisons and the New American Racism

Paul Street

DEFINED SIMPLY as overt public bigotry, racism in the United States has fallen to an all-time low. Understood in socioeconomic, political, and institutional terms, however, American racism is as alive as ever. More than thirty years after the heroic victories of the civil rights movement, Stanley Aronowitz notes, "the stigma of race remains the unmeltable condition of the black social and economic situation."

Consider a recent *Chicago Tribune* article that appeared well off the front page, under the title "Towns Put Dreams in Prisons." In downstate Hoopeston, Illinois, there is "talk of the mothballed canneries that once made this a boom town and whether any of that bustling spirit might return if the Illinois Department of Corrections comes to town." Seeking jobs and economic growth, Hoopeston's leaders are negotiating with state officials for the right to host a shiny new maximum-security correctional facility. "You don't like to think about incarceration," Hoopeston's Mayor is quoted as saying, "but this is an opportunity for Hoopeston. We've been plagued by plant closings." The mayor's judgment is seconded in the *Tribune*'s account of the considerable benefits, including dramatically increased tax revenues, that flowed to Ina, Illinois, after it signed up to become a prison town a few years ago.

Two things are missing from this story. The first is an appropriate sense of horror at the spectacle of a society in which local officials are reduced to lobbying for prisons as their best chance for economic growth. The second concerns the matter of race. Nowhere did the reporter or his informants (insofar as they are fully and accurately recorded) mention either the predominantly white composition of the keepers or the predominantly black composition of the kept in the prison towns that increasingly look to the mass incarceration boom as the solution to their economic problems. As everyone knows, but few like to discuss, the mostly white residents of those towns are building their economic "dreams" on the transport and lockdown of unfree African-Americans from impoverished inner-city neighborhoods in places like Chicago, Rockford, East St. Louis, and Rock Island.

This second absence is consistent with the politically correct rules of the new racism that plagues the United States at the turn of the millennium. There is a widespread belief among whites—deeply and ironically reinforced by the demise of open public racial prejudice—that African-Americans now enjoy equal and color-blind opportunity. "As white America sees it," write Leonard Steinhorn and Barbara Diggs-Brown in their sobering *By the Color of Their Skin: the Illusion of Integration and the Reality of Race*, "every effort has been made to welcome blacks into the American mainstream, and now they're on their own... 'We got the message, we made the corrections—get on with it.'"

"Going Downstate"

Corrections, indeed. Nowhere, perhaps, is the persistence and even resurgence of racism more evident than in America's burgeoning "correctional" system. At the turn of the twentieth century, *blacks are 12.3 percent of U.S. population, but they make up fully half of the roughly two million Americans currently behind bars*. On any given day, 30 percent of African-American males ages twenty to twenty-nine are "under correctional supervision"—either in jail or prison or on probation or parole. And according to a chilling statistical model used by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, a young black man age sixteen in 1996 faces a 29 percent

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chance of spending time in prison during his life. The corresponding statistic for white men in the same age group is 4 percent. The remarkable number and percentage of persons locked up by the state or otherwise under the watchful eye of criminal justice authorities in the United States—far beyond those of the rest of the industrialized world—is black to an extraordinary degree.

This harsh reality gives rise to extreme racial dichotomies. Take, for example, the different meanings of the phrase "going downstate" for youths of different skin colors in the Chicago metropolitan area. For many white teens, those words evoke the image of a trip with Mom and Dad to begin academic careers at the prestigious University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign or at one of the state's many other public universities. But for younger Chicago-area blacks, especially males (just 6 percent of the state's prisoners are female), "going downstate" more likely connotes a trip under armed guard to begin prison careers at one of the state's numerous maximum- or medium-security prisons. Indeed, Illinois has 149,525 more persons enrolled in its four-year public universities than in its prisons. When it comes to blacks, who make up 12.25 percent of the public university population, it has 5,500 more prisoners, making blacks 66 percent of the state's prisoners. For every African-American enrolled in those universities, at least two are in prison or on parole in Illinois.

Similar differences of meaning can be found in other states with significant black populations. In New York, where the relevant phrase is "going upstate," the Justice Policy Institute and the Correctional Association of New York report that in the 1990s more blacks entered prison just for drug offenses than graduated from the state's massive university system with undergraduate, masters, and doctoral degrees combined.

In some inner-city neighborhoods, researchers and advocates report, a preponderant majority of black males now possess criminal records. Criminologists Dina Rose and Todd Clear have found black neighborhoods in Tallahassee, Florida, where every resident can identify at least one friend or relative who has been incarcerated. In many predominantly black urban communities across the country, it appears, incarceration is so widespread and commonplace that it has become what the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics director Jan Chaiken recently called "almost a normative life experience." Boys are growing up with the sense that it is standard for older brothers, uncles, fathers, cousins, and, perhaps, someday, themselves to be locked up by the state.

Labor Market Disenfranchisement

Researchers and advocates tracking the impact of mass incarceration find devastating consequences in high-poverty black communities. The most well known is the widespread political disenfranchisement of felons and ex-felons. The economic effects are equally significant. African-Americans are disproportionately and often deeply disenfranchised in competitive job markets by low skills, poor schools, weakened family structures, racial discrimination in hiring and promotion, and geographic isolation from the leading sectors of job growth. When prison and felony records are thrown into that mixture, the results can be disastrous. It is not uncommon to hear academic researchers and service providers cite unemployment rates as high as 50 percent for people with criminal records. One study, based in California during the early 1990s, found that just 21 percent of that state's parolees were working full time. In a detailed study, Karen Needels found that less than 40 percent of 1,176 men released from Georgia's prison system in 1976 had any officially recorded earnings in each year from 1983 to 1991. For those with earnings, average annual wages were exceedingly low and differed significantly by race: white former inmates averaged $7,880 per year and blacks made $4,762.

In the most widely cited study in the growing literature on the labor market consequences of racially disparate criminal justice policies, Harvard economist Richard Freeman used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY). Limiting his sample to out-of-school men and controlling for numerous variables (drug usage, education, region, and age) that might bias upward the link between criminal records and weak labor market attachment, Freeman found that those who

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had been in jail or on probation in 1980 had a 19 percent higher chance of being unemployed in 1988 than those with no involvement in the criminal justice system. He also found that prison records reduced the amount of time employed after release by 25 percent to 30 percent.

More recently, Princeton sociologist Bruce Western mined NLSY data to show that incarceration has "large and enduring effects on job-prospects of ex-convicts." He found that the negative labor market effects of youth incarceration can last for more than a decade and that adult incarceration reduces paid employment by five to ten weeks annually. Because incarceration rates are especially high among those with the least power in the labor market (young and unskilled minority men), the U.S. justice system exacerbates inequality.

This research is consistent with numerous experimental studies suggesting that the employment prospects of job applicants with criminal records are far worse than the chances of persons who have never been convicted or imprisoned. It is consistent also with evidence from labor market intermediaries dealing with ex-offenders. Project STRIVE, an established job-placement program that mainly serves younger minority males in inner-city Chicago, reports that it placed thirty-seven of fifty ex-offenders in jobs last year, leaving a 26 percent unemployment rate even for people who went through an especially successful program. The Center for Employment Opportunity in New York City is another "successful" program. Focused specifically on ex-offenders, it fails to place nearly a third of its clients. Another standard bearer in the field, "Project Rio" of the Texas Workforce Commission, claims to process fifteen thousand inmates a year. After one year, a little over two-thirds of parolees who go through Project Rio hold jobs. More telling, since most ex-offenders are thrown into the labor market without the benefit of a transitional employment program, just 36 percent of a group of Texas parolees who did not enroll in Project Rio had a job one year after their release. And "even when paroled inmates are able to find jobs," the *New York Times* reported last fall, "they earn only half as much as people of the same social and economic background who have not been incarcerated."

The obstacles to ex-offender employment include the refusal of many employers even to consider hiring an "ex-con." Employers routinely check for criminal backgrounds in numerous sectors, including banking, security, financial services, law, education, and health care. But for many jobs, employer attitudes are irrelevant: state codes place steep barriers to the hiring of ex-offenders in numerous government and other occupations. At the same time, Western notes, "the increasingly violent and overcrowded state of prisons and jails is likely to produce certain attitudes, mannerisms, and behavioral practices that 'on the inside' function to enhance survival but are not compatible with success in the conventional job market." The alternately aggressive and sullen posture that prevails behind bars is deadly in a job market where entry-level occupations increasingly demand "soft" skills related to selling and customer service. In this as in countless other ways, the inmate may be removed, at least temporarily (see below), from prison, but prison lives on within the ex-offender, limiting his or her freedom on the outside.

A Vicious Circle

The situation arising from mass black incarceration is fraught with self-fulfilling policy ironies. At the very moment that American public discourse in racial matters has become officially inclusive, the United States is filling its expanding number of cellblocks with an ever-rising sea of black people monitored by predominantly white overseers. Echoes of slavery haunt the new incarceration state, reminding us of unresolved historical issues in the United States of Amnesia.

Mass incarceration is just as ironically juxtaposed to welfare reform. Even as the broader political and policy-making community is replacing taxpayer-financed "welfare dependency" with "workforce attachment" and free market discipline leading (supposedly) to "self-sufficiency" and two-parent family stability among the urban "underclass," criminal justice policies are pushing hundreds of thousands of already disadvantaged and impoverished blacks further from minimally remunerative engagement with the labor market. It does this by

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warehousing them in expensive, publicly financed, sex-segregated holding pens, where rehabilitation has been discredited and authoritarian incapacitation is the rule.

Droves of alienated men are removed from contact with children, parents, spouses, and lovers, contributing to the chronic shortage of suitable male marriage partners and resident fathers in the black community. Black humor on Chicago's South Side quips that "the only thing prison cures is heterosexuality." A connection probably exists between rampant sexual assault and sexual segregation behind prison bars and the disturbing fact that AIDS is now the leading cause of death among blacks between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four.

Incarceration deepens a job-skill deficit that is a leading factor explaining "criminal" behavior among disadvantaged people in the first place. "Crime rates are inversely related," Richard B. Freeman and Jeffrey Fagan have shown, "to expected legal wages, particularly among young males with limited job skills or prospects." The "war on drugs" that contributes so strongly to minority incarceration also inflates the price of underground substances. Combined with ex-offenders' shortage of marketable skills in the legal economy, it creates irresistible incentives for the sort of income-generating conduct that leads back to prison. The lost potential earnings, savings, consumer demand, and human and social capital that result from mass incarceration cost black communities untold millions of dollars in potential economic development, worsening an inner-city political economy already crippled by decades of capital flight and de-industrialization. The dazed and embittered graduates of the prison-industrial complex are released back into a small number of predominantly black and high-poverty ZIP codes and census tracts, deepening the concentration of poverty, crime, and despair that is the hallmark of modern American "hyper-segregation" by race and class.

Meanwhile, prisoners' deletion from official U.S. unemployment statistics contributes to excessively rosy perceptions of American socioeconomic performance that worsen the political climate for minorities. Bruce Western has shown that factoring incarceration into unemployment rates challenges the conventional American notion that unregulated labor markets have been out-performing Europe's supposedly hyper-regulated employment system. Far from taking a laissez-faire approach, "the U.S. state has made a large and coercive intervention into the labor market through the expansion of the legal system." An American unemployment rate adjusted for imprisonment would rise by two points, bringing the U.S. ratio much closer to that of European nations, where including inmates raises the joblessness rate by only a few tenths of a percentage point. Counting prisoners would raise the official black male unemployment rate, which Western estimates at nearly 39 percent during the mid-1990s (including prisoners). Western and his colleague Becky Petit find that, when incarceration is factored in, there was "no enduring recovery in the employment of young black high-school drop-outs" during the eight-year Clinton employment boom.

By artificially reducing both aggregate and racially specific unemployment rates, mass incarceration makes it easier for the majority culture to continue to ignore the urban ghettoes that live on beneath official rhetoric about "opportunity" being generated by "free markets." It encourages and enables the new, that is, subtler and more covert racism. Relying heavily on longstanding American opportunity myths and standard class ideology, this new racism blames inner-city minorities for their own "failure" to match white performance in a supposedly now free, meritorious, and color-blind society. Whites who believe that racial barriers have been lifted in the United States think that people of color who do not "succeed" fall short because of choices they made or because of inherent cultural or even biological limitations.

Correctional Keynesianism

The ultimate policy irony at the heart of America's passion for prisons can be summarized by the phrase "correctional Keynesianism": the prison construction boom fed by the rising market of black offenders is a job and tax-base creator for predominantly white communities that are generally far removed from urban mi-

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nority concentrations. These communities, often recently hollowed out by the de-industrializing and family-farm-destroying gales of the "free market " system, have become part of a prison-industrial lobby that presses for harsher sentences and tougher laws, seeking to protect and expand their economic base even as crime rates continue to fall. They do so with good reason. The prison-building boom serves as what British sociologist David Ladipo calls "a latter-day Keynesian infrastructural investment program for [often] blight-struck communities.... Indeed, it has been phenomenally successful in terms of creating relatively secure, decent paid, and often unionized jobs."

According to Todd Clear, the negative labor market effects of mass incarceration on black communities are probably minor "compared to the economic relocation of resources" from black to white communities that mass incarceration entails. As Clear explains,

> Each prisoner *represents an economic asset that has been removed from that community and placed elsewhere* [emphasis added]. As an economic being, the person would spend money at or near his or her area of residence—typically, an inner city. Imprisonment displaces that economic activity: Instead of buying snacks in a local deli, the prisoner makes those purchases in a prison commissary. The removal may represent a loss of economic value to the home community, but it is a boon to the prison [host] community. Each prisoner represents as much as $25,000 in income for the community in which the prison is located, not to mention the value of constructing the prison facility in the first place. This can be *a massive transfer of value* [emphasis added]: A young male worth a few thousand dollars of support to children and local purchases is transformed into a $25,000 financial asset to a rural prison community. The economy of the rural community is artificially amplified, the local city economy artificially deflated.

It's a disturbing picture, even in this cynical age, full of unsettling parallels and living links to chattel slavery: young black men being involuntarily removed as "economic assets" from black communities to distant rural destinations where they are kept under lock and key by white-majority overseers. It is difficult to imagine a more pathetic denouement to America's long, interwoven narratives of class and racial privilege. The rise of correctional Keynesianism is one of the negative and racially charged consequences of technically color-blind political-economic processes.

An Analogy

Historical folklore romanticizes the large number of British and European convicts and ex-convicts who peopled and prospered in colonial North America and Australia. But, leaving aside the question of how many of those ex-offenders thrived, much less survived, the transplanted convicts of earlier eras landed in largely agricultural societies not yet based on waged and salaried labor and concentrated private monopolies in the means of production and distribution. It is vastly more difficult for an ex-offender to re-enter the U.S. modern capitalist society in which the preponderant majority of working-age persons must find someone willing to "take the risk" (make the investment) in hiring them. A more telling and accurate historical analogy in their case—and the racial consistency rightly suggests considerable historical continuities of race and class—is found in the economic and labor market circumstances faced by America's suddenly free former slaves after the Civil War. Woefully short on capital, skills, and education, they attempted to enter a society that still despised and coerced them.

To be sure, it is no simple matter to determine the precise extent to which mass incarceration is simply exacerbating the deep socioeconomic and related cultural and political traumas that already plague inner-city communities and help explain disproportionate black "criminality," arrest, and incarceration in the first place. Still, it is undeniable that the rush to incarcerate is having a profoundly negative effect on black communities. Equally undeniable is the fact that black incarceration rates reflect deep racial bias in the criminal justice system and the broader society. Do the cheerleaders of "get tough" crime and sentencing policy really believe that African-Americans deserve to suffer so disproportionately at the hands of the criminal jus-

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tice system? There is a vast literature showing that structural, institutional, and cultural racism and severe segregation by race and class are leading causes of inner-city crime. Another considerable body of literature shows that blacks are victims of racial bias at every level of the criminal justice system—from stop, frisk, and arrest to prosecution, sentencing, release, and execution. These disparities give legitimacy to the movement of ex-offender groups for the expungement of criminal and prison records for many nonviolent offenses, especially in cases where ex-convicts have shown an earnest desire to go straight.

Further and deeper remedies are required. These include a moratorium on new prison construction (to stop the insidious, self-replicating expansion of the prison-industrial complex), the repeal of laws that deny voting rights to felons and ex-felons; amnesty and release for most inmates convicted of nonviolent crimes; decriminalization of narcotics; the repeal of the "war on drugs" at home and abroad; revision of state and federal sentencing and local "zero tolerance" practices and ordinances; abolition of racial, ethnic, and class profiling in police practice; and the outlawing of private, for-profit prisons and other economic activities that derive investment gain from mass incarceration. Activists and policy makers should call for a criminal- to social-justice peace dividend: the large-scale transfer of funds spent on mass arrest, surveillance, and incarceration into such policy areas as drug treatment, job-training, transitional services for ex-offenders, and public education regarding the employment potential of ex-offenders. They should call for the diversion of criminal justice resources from crime in the streets (that is, the harassment and imprisonment of lower-class and inner-city people) to serious engagement with under-sentenced crime in the suites. More broadly, they should seek a general redistribution of resources from privileged and often fantastically wealthy persons to those most penalized from birth by America's inherited class and race privilege. America's expanding prison, probation, and parole populations are recruited especially from what leading slavery reparations advocate Randall Robinson calls "the millions of African-Americans bottom-mired in urban hells by the savage time-release social debilitations of American slavery."

The ultimate solutions lie, perhaps, beyond the parameters of the existing political economic order. "Capitalism," Eugene Debs argued in 1920, "needs and must have the prison to protect itself from the [lower-class] criminals it has created." But the examples of Western Europe and Canada, where policy makers prefer prevention and rehabilitation through more social democratic approaches, show that mass incarceration is hardly an inevitable product of capitalism. And nothing can excuse policy makers and activists from the responsibility to end racist criminal justice practices that significantly exacerbate the difficulties faced by the nation's most disadvantaged. More than merely a symptom of the tangled mess of problems that create, sustain, and deepen America's insidious patterns of class and race inequality, mass incarceration has become a central part of the mess. For these and other reasons, it will be an especially worthy target for creative democratic protest and policy formation in the new millennium. ●

Paul Street is director of research at the Chicago Urban League. His articles, essays, and reviews have appeared in *In These Times, Z Magazine, Monthly Review,* the *Journal of Social History, Mid-America,* and the *Journal of American Ethnic History.* A list of sources used in this article may be found at our Web site (www.dissentmagazine.org).

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'Justifiable Homicide'

When the Death Penalty Hits Home

Gabrielle Banks

On the night of Manny Babbitt's execution at San Quentin, Naomi White had a bad fall. Somewhere along the gravel path leading away from the prison, her ankle buckled and she tumbled face forward in the darkness. Her husband, Derrel Myers, knelt down beside her.

Before the two could exchange a word, a pair of headlights appeared. Two men got out of a minivan and came to Naomi's side. Together with Derrel, the strangers lifted Naomi to her feet. The driver offered Naomi and Derrel a ride to their car, explaining he couldn't take them right away. "We have to get around to the back gate." The van charged forward into the vacant night.

The road behind them led to only one place, so it was clear that, like Derrel and Naomi, the two men and the woman in the front passenger seat had just come from the vigil at the prison entrance. Earlier that evening, about seven hundred death penalty opponents descended on San Quentin—schoolchildren, folksingers, and burly Vietnam vets—engulfing the usual contingent of about twenty death penalty supporters. Babbitt, the convicted murderer awaiting execution, was a decorated African-American Marine Corps veteran who had survived the seventy-seven-day siege at Khe Sanh, Vietnam. Naomi and Derrel, white human rights activists who had come of age during the Vietnam War, had come to San Quentin to protest what they considered a premeditated murder.

At 12:01 A.M., the hour the prison officials were scheduled to administer the lethal injection, a disembodied voice announced over the loudspeaker that Babbitt had been granted a thirty-minute stay for a final U.S. Supreme Court review of his case. At this point, Naomi turned to Derrel and said, "Let's get out of here."

"It was clear to everyone there that they were going to execute him in thirty minutes," Naomi later explained. "It was like waiting for this murder to take place and I couldn't stand it. I got physically ill and dizzy."

Earlier that evening, in the same crowd, Manny's youngest sister, Donna Kendricks, experienced similar symptoms. She had been fasting for a few days in anticipation of this night. At 10 P.M., she started to feel lightheaded. "I was doing a lot of crying and I was sick from that and I started to vomit," Donna recalls. "I couldn't stand up."

Just after midnight, Jesse Morris, one of the public defenders on the Babbitt case, got a call on his cell phone saying the stay had been lifted. Jesse had been assigned to accompany Manny's family at all public appearances during a whirlwind clemency campaign. Jesse looked over at Allen, Donna's husband, and gently nodded. Allen said, "C'mon, Donna, we gotta go." Donna didn't ask why. She was hoping Jesse had gotten word that Manny was going to live, and they would drive around to the back entrance and find out Manny had been granted a reprieve.

Back in the minivan, the man in the backseat asked Derrel what his placard said. Pasted to the posterboard was a blow-up of Naomi and Derrel's late son, JoJo, with the words "My son opposed the death penalty. So do I." Derrel explained that on January 19, 1996, their twenty-three year old son was shot to death in cold blood on his way home from work at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in San Francisco. The police never identified or apprehended JoJo's murderer. Naomi and Derrel had tried to instill in JoJo a sense of social responsibility. It was to honor JoJo's blossoming political consciousness that they con-

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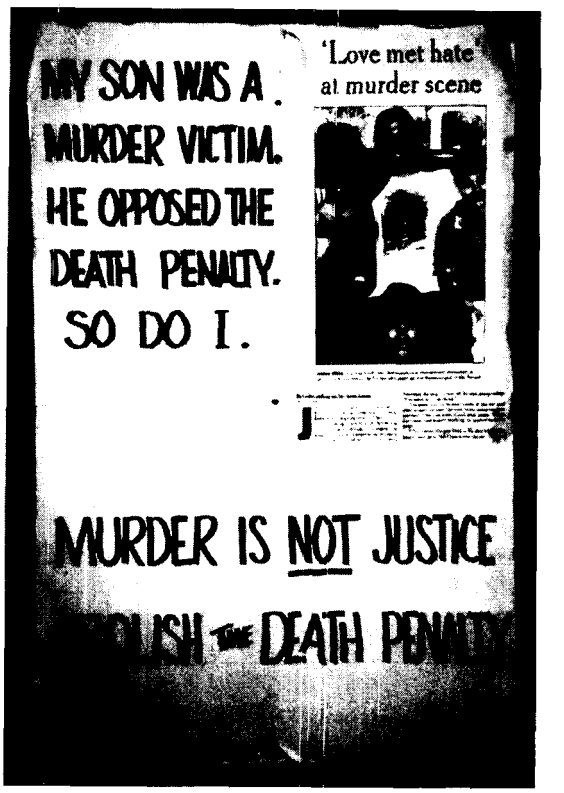
tinued to participate to this degree in public demonstrations.

Her haze now clearing, Naomi realized she knew nothing about her companions, not even where they stood on the death penalty. She noticed the woman in the front seat was doubled over, moaning. The driver and the man in the back seat took turns saying, "It's okay, Donna" and "We'll make it." Donna and the men were African-American. Naomi remembered reading in the paper that Manny had a sister named Donna. It all fell together when she realized that the van was charging full-speed out the front entrance, around the San Quentin peninsula toward the death chamber. These two families had little in common up until this moment. Now, by this surreal coincidence, their lives were converging in the uncharted territory of irreconcilable loss.



SUCH COINCIDENCES are not uncommon. And the messy ironies dredged up at executions are not lost on the eclectic coalition of organizations known as the "death penalty abolition" movement. "When my grandmother was killed it was a terrible thing for the family," says Bill Pelke, whose nonprofit group, Journey of Hope: From Violence to Healing, offers joint panels whereby murder victims' family members speak alongside family members of death row inmates. "If we'd known somebody was going to attack her, people would have been there and stopped it. But for families to know that a loved one is going to be killed and nobody will do anything about it . . . to me, that's barbaric."

The classic moral measuring stick for the question of capital punishment is, "What if your loved one were killed?" The coincidence for Aundre Herron, an attorney at the California Appellate Project, was that she was working on behalf of death row inmates when her brother was murdered. "The whole purpose of living," she says, "is not to replicate the bad things that were done to you or to do them to other people. That strikes me as not really learning much from your experience."

For the Babbitt family, the ironies seemed infinite. While Jesse Morris's minivan sped toward the back gate, Manny's older brother Bill was inside the prison watching as an anonymous doctor delivered the prescribed dose of poison to Manny through an intravenous tube. Seven relatives of the victim, seventy-eight-year-old Leah Schendel, also watched from the observation room. In December of 1980, Bill Babbitt had turned his brother in to the police when he discovered evidence pointing to Manny as the perpetrator of the highly publicized Sacramento murder. Bill wanted to get help for his brother, a paranoid schizophrenic who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. The police agreed to provide treatment for Manny and to spare his life. Instead, Bill says, "I delivered Manny to the hands of his executioner." Now, nineteen years later, Bill was the only family member Manny would allow to be present in the death chamber.

The Soldier

Manuel Piña Babbitt, the sixth of eight children, grew up in Wareham, Massachusetts. His father, Charles, emigrated from the Cape Verde Islands to work in the cranberry bogs of coastal Massachusetts. Charles foresaw the hardship and indignity his children would face, and he

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wanted to toughen them up. "When he'd whip us," Bill Babbitt recalls, "he used to say he was doing it so we didn't end up in prison."

When Manny was twelve, he was hit by a car and sustained debilitating cerebral injuries. He repeated every grade in school until he dropped out at seventeen, a seventh grader. That same year—1967—he enlisted in the Marines. Although he was functionally illiterate, a recruiting officer helped him fill in the answers on the entrance exam. Manny's youngest brother, Stephen, remembers thinking at the time, "Manny had no judgment, he couldn't make decisions, he had no idea how to take care of himself in the real world. I really couldn't believe they'd let someone like that into the Marines."

Only one year before, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara initiated Project 100,000 to counteract the deficit caused by draft resistance and college deferments. Effectively, he lowered test standards so as to "recruit and rehabilitate" a hundred thousand previously ineligible GIs for service in Vietnam. The Army lowered its passing test score to 10 percent and took recruits with IQs as low as 62. Manny Babbitt got swept up in the tide.

Manny's mother, Josephine Piña Santiago, would eventually send four sons and two grandsons to serve in the military. It was one way, she knew, that people could improve their circumstances. Donna remembers when Manny came home from boot camp on a furlough before leaving for Vietnam. "We were very, very poor. And to see my brother come home with a nice, bright white T-shirt, it was almost like, 'You made it! You got out!' He looked crisp. He looked really good and I was really proud of him. All my brothers were. He went in there looking for a better life."

AROUND THE same time that Manny was preparing to go to war, a young Naomi White was waking up at 3 A.M. out in California and padding her clothes with newspaper to prepare for violent clashes with the police at the Oakland draft center. Protesters were barricading themselves in front of buses full of inductees going off to Vietnam. "It was a week of battle in the streets for the bodies, minds, and souls of these young men," she says. In Stockton, California, Derrel Myers, a young man with working-class, rural roots, had considered joining the army at seventeen. But by the time he was called to register for the draft at twenty-two, he had undergone a political awakening. Derrel refused to sign the loyalty oath. He began organizing antiwar newspapers and coffeehouses where returning GIs could tell new recruits what they'd seen firsthand.

Six months after his visit home, Manny's unit arrived at the American military base at Khe Sanh. The valley of Khe Sanh was about three miles from the North Vietnamese border, right next to the Ho Chi Minh Trail. To this day, military buffs question General William Westmoreland's decision to order so many young men into such a precarious situation: the North Vietnamese army outnumbered the American GIs six to one. From January to February 1968, the base was under direct attack in what became one of the bloodiest, costliest battles of the war. When the siege finally ended, an estimated ten thousand North Vietnamese and more than a thousand American soldiers were dead, a hundred thousand tons of bombs littered the surrounding countryside, and the United States had abandoned its post in Khe Sanh.

The pace at Khe Sanh was relentless and unpredictable. Robert Harrell, a vet from Manny's unit, remembers, "You were seeing people blown up, our friends, next to us. Like I'm talking right now and five minutes later I see the person I was just talking to, their head laying over there, their arm, body parts, insides hanging out. That had to affect anyone. And we wasn't but eighteen, nineteen."

Manny's unit had to go in and literally pick up the pieces of their fellow GIs. For years, he couldn't clear these images from his memory. Manny later told his brother Bill he felt sorry for the Vietnamese people. "The Cape Verdean people were colonized and ripped off culturally and economically by the Portuguese, sort of like France ripped off the Vietnamese," Bill says. "Manny was sent to kill colonial subjects like us."

Throughout the barrage of incoming and outgoing mortar fire, U.S. aircraft landed on a foggy airstrip where soldiers unloaded supplies and ammunition and picked up wounded com-

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rades bound for hospital units. Before he left Khe Sanh on one of these transports with a shard of shrapnel embedded in the lobe of his brain, Manny saw dozens die. The particular conditions at Khe Sanh would become a crucial factor in Manny's clemency plea more than thirty years later.

Each plane that landed was an enormous and conspicuous target for enemy fire once its twin headlights came into view. When planes approached the runway, everyone scrambled to take cover. Manny was on this airstrip when he sustained his injury. Soldiers then carted him onto a helicopter bound for the hospital ship in Da Nang. "There were at least three dozen body bags stacked in rows," Manny later recounted. "They threw me on top of a few of them. I didn't know where I was at, either. With my hands, I'd feel around and move certain things. Limbs that were torn apart, they put them on top so they wouldn't get so messed up. Some heads and some arms and stuff like that. Part of it, I try to bury in my thoughts, but it comes up in dreams."

Almost immediately upon his return to the United States, Manny began experiencing flashbacks, blackouts, and angry outbursts. He would drink or get high to numb his memories. He "came to" in unlikely places and started to disconnect from his wife and their children. He got busted for robbery. He was in and out of institutions. He attempted to commit suicide several times. Manny was diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenic. Ultimately, eleven years after his return from combat, the family decided that Manny should move to Sacramento to live with Bill.

The Crime

In the early morning of December 19, 1980, an elderly Jewish woman named Leah Schendel died from a heart attack after being brutally beaten in her home. Schendel liked to play the nickel slots on the trips she took with her sister to Reno. She had recently returned from one of these trips on the night she was killed. Schendel lived alone in Sacramento Manor, an independent-living community for seniors. Her attacker had presumably entered through a slashed screen door. Schendel was found under a bloody bedspread, with no undergarments on, a nightgown pulled up above her waist, and a teapot placed over her genital area. She had what looked like a leather strap tied around her ankle. Her dresser drawers had been ransacked, and the phone was off the hook. A few rolls of coins, a watch, and an engraved cigarette lighter were also missing.

Manny Babbitt never denied his role in Leah Schendel's murder. But until the end, he claimed he had no recollection of it. On the night of the murder, Manny had been shooting pool at a bar called Styx, one block from Schendel's home. He'd been drinking and smoking dope. He left the Styx on foot, using a shortcut that ran from the rundown strip mall where the bar was located through Sacramento Manor to Bill's house. The last thing Manny remembered was dense fog and headlights narrowing into focus as he walked along the road in front of the Manor. At that moment, he said, he flashed back to the airstrip at Khe Sanh.

In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association first described an anxiety disorder called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of mental disorders. However, by the time the Veterans Administration opened the first facility to treat patients with PTSD, Manny Babbitt was living on death row.

At various stages in the appeals process, Manny's attorneys posed the theory that Manny had seen Schendel's open door and burst through the screen door to take cover from what he imagined was enemy fire. He startled Schendel, who was four foot ten and weighed under a hundred pounds. He attacked her, and according to the autopsy, she fought back as best she could. When she collapsed, he covered her body with a bedspread. At Khe Sanh, soldiers covered dead bodies with anything at hand in order to preserve them. He'd rummaged through her drawers and taken her tefilin—a tiny, boxed scroll affixed to a leather strap, which religious Jews wrap around heads and arms for prayer—and tagged her ankle with it, just as the troops at Khe Sanh—where the onslaught lasted an unprecedented seventy-seven straight days—had tagged ankles to distinguish dead soldiers among the wounded. GIs in Vietnam were also known to pilfer personal

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effects when they raided civilian homes (a practice known as souveniring), which explained why, rather than taking jewelry or a stereo, Manny stole small change, a watch, and a lighter. Manny might have left the phone off the hook, they said, after attempting, in this altered state, to call in the medics. Certainly, the ruptured screen door, the tagged ankle, the teapot, and the unhooked phone receiver (covered with fingerprints) indicated that Manny was not of sound mind when he entered and left the scene of the crime.

Although there was substantial and plausible evidence that Manny was in a dissociative, hallucinatory state at the time of the murder, his court-appointed defense attorney—who allegedly drank double vodkas during the trial lunch breaks—did not enter any of it into the court record at trial. An all-white jury convicted Manny of first-degree murder with special circumstances—burglary and attempted rape—which qualified him for the death penalty. While on death row, Manny was belatedly awarded a Purple Heart. In 1999, another Vietnam vet, California governor Gray Davis, denied him clemency and authorized his execution.

His Brother's Keeper

The act of turning his brother in reshaped the course of Bill Babbitt's life. Just two months beforehand, Manny had left Providence, Rhode Island, to stay with Bill, Bill's wife, Linda, and their children in Sacramento. The Babbitt sisters and their mother, Josephine, had already followed Bill to California. Manny, too, was hoping for a fresh start.

Linda worked nights as a corrections officer; during the day she drove Manny to job interviews. She and Donna also tried to introduce him to a number of single women. But both potential employers and potential girlfriends were put off by his manner and by his morbid obsession with the war. One day, Linda found money stashed in odd places around the house. Then Bill found a piggy bank stuffed with five or six rolls of nickels and a cigarette lighter engraved with the initials LS. He couldn't make sense of it. Then he remembered reports in the newspaper about an old woman who'd been killed that week in the neighborhood. The newspaper said Leah Schendel had been playing the nickel slots in Reno just days before the murder.

"My wife was sleeping. I went over and woke her," Bill says. He knelt at the bedside. "Linda, let's get down and pray." He handed Linda the article and said, "I think Manny did this." Bill considered giving Manny a bus ticket back to Providence. But neither he nor Linda wanted to live with that kind of burden.

Bill spent several hours the next morning interviewing with police detectives. He accompanied them to Donna's house. Manny was in Donna's living room goofing around with her kids, making tents out of chairs and sheets. Bill went in alone. He challenged Manny to a game of pool over at Styx. Manny fell for it. Out on the street, the police arrested him. Manny didn't try to resist.

Bill didn't want to ride in the patrol car with Manny. He couldn't contain his tears or get a handle on his emotions. "I felt like I had done a good thing, but something in the back of my mind told me I had done a bad thing," he says. Just a few years earlier, Bill considered himself a militant. Like Naomi and Derrel, he'd protested U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. He'd also attended Black Panther meetings and called the police "pigs."

Turning Manny in, he says, represented a great leap of faith. "For me, going to the police was an act of growing up and showing citizenship at its finest and showing faith in the system." The "great leap" included providing evidence for the prosecution and aiding in Manny's arrest. But he didn't simply turn in his brother as David Kaczynski did in the famous Unabomber case. Before the end of the day, Bill agreed to help get Manny to confess. When Manny insisted he didn't remember what happened that night, Detective Terry Brown was recorded on tape saying, "You know you're not going to go to the gas chamber or anything like that." But, the Sacramento Police Department had no authority to make such promises.

Bill and Linda Babbitt were caught at a moral crossroads. "I can well imagine what Bill went through in deciding what to do, since I've been there myself," says David Kaczynski, whose brother, Ted, was convicted of murder.

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"Just like me, Bill Babbitt was led to believe that if he helped the police, the police would help his brother." David and his wife, Linda, befriended Bill and Linda Babbitt several weeks before Manny's execution. Then David began to speak publicly about the inequities between the two cases. Unlike Manny, Ted Kaczynski—who is white and college-educated—was convicted of three counts of murder and granted life in prison.

Once Bill made his decision, the justice system took over, rendering him and Linda immobilized spectators. Years later, as Manny's execution date drew near, Manny's attorney told Bill to track down Manny's five estranged children. Manny's eldest son, Manuel Jr., later told Donna that deep down he was hoping he wouldn't like his father. But Manny was so completely different from how he had imagined that he was overcome with guilt that he hadn't come to meet him sooner. After Manny lost his clemency plea, Manuel Jr. and the rest of Manny's children surrounded Bill at the podium of a rally and publicly forgave him, as Manny long ago had done, for his decision to turn Manny in to the police.

Open Wounds

People often ask Naomi and Derrel who killed their son. When the news of JoJo's murder first broke, it was a constant question. "We'd get these reporters calling from all over," Naomi remembers. "Then, when they found out the perpetrator of the crime hadn't been caught, they would immediately lose interest." Long before the murder investigation ended, Naomi and Derrel realized they needed to refocus their efforts. They wanted to spend more time remembering their son and less time in pursuit of the perpetrator. What really mattered, they explained in a joint editorial following JoJo's death, was not who killed JoJo, but what killed JoJo. In other words, what kind of a world would create a person who would kill an innocent person like JoJo White or, for that matter, like Leah Schendel?

As in the case of Leah Schendel, the motivation of JoJo's attacker was unclear. JoJo had been driving a few friends home on a Friday afternoon. They pulled over. One of the young men got out of the car to urinate next to a vacant building and came face to face with the assailant. The friend ran back to the car, got in, and urged JoJo to leave quickly because this man looked crazy. At that moment, the "crazy" young man walked up to the driver's side of the car and said to JoJo, "Are you trying to fuck with me?" JoJo answered, "No, no. Peace, brother." The man said, "You're fucking with me." JoJo said, "No, peace. One love." The man pulled out a pistol and shot him in the heart.

JoJo came from a stable, middle-class home. He was a jock and a poet. His learning disability landed him in special education classes, where the majority of his classmates were poor people of color, and they became his cohort. JoJo was always looking out for the guys who were most overlooked, Derrel says, the Manny Babbitts of the world. At twenty-three, JoJo was just coming into his own personally and politically. A few days before his death, he had attended a rally in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the now famous journalist on Pennsylvania's death row. But JoJo was the last person his friends expected would die from gun violence. "This young man killed somebody who would have stood up and defended him with his life," Naomi says.

In the nineteen years following Leah Schendel's murder, her granddaughter, Laura Thompson, sought resolution—or at least some solace—in Manny's execution. She called in to each radio station Bill Babbitt and David Kaczynski visited on their campaign to halt the execution. She attended every demonstration. When Manny's daughters approached her at a post-clemency gathering to plead for forgiveness, Laura told them, "No, your father needs to die."

JoJo's friends also wanted desperately to find the person who could pay for his needless death. Naomi and Derrel wanted this man off the streets, but Derrel tried to convey to them that he would never be satisfied with a fingerprint or a name or a positive ID. "It's not that I have this big heart and I can forgive and forget. It's that I want a bigger kind of justice."

"Initially, we're looked at as being either psychos or saints," says Renny Cushing, Director of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation (MVFR). "In fact, our members are just normal, flawed people who have had horrible

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experiences vested upon us." After Derrel first told JoJo's story at a San Quentin vigil under the auspices of an abolition group called Death Penalty Focus, he found himself surrounded by death penalty advocates. Derrel remembers saying, "I understand your anger. After six young children are murdered by some lunatic, your response is to murder the lunatic. But how about preventing the lunatic from becoming one?"

Quest for Closure

Though the Schendels and the White-Myers may never agree on the matter of punishment, both families have endured an insurmountable loss. One of the key selling points district attorneys use when they approach victims' families about pursuing the death penalty is the alluring possibility of closure. In a letter to Governor Davis, Leah Schendel's niece, Joyce Weinberg, asked that he uphold Manny's sentence. "The loss of dear Leah. . . [has] created an emptiness that can never be replaced," she wrote. "Our suffering has not lessened the emotional upheaval of this crime in over 18 years."

"Healing is a process, it's not an event," says Renny Cushing. MVFR and other abolition groups consider the families of executed inmates like Manny to be murder victims' families. Their idea is not to create another unfillable void. "When it comes to an execution, it doesn't matter how many times you kill somebody," Renny says. "You can't bring the person you lost back."

Naomi agrees. "People get tricked into thinking there's some kind of closure," she says. "I don't find that possible. I'll never stop missing JoJo." Naomi has avoided accepting invitations from victims' groups that advocate tougher sentencing and execution of violent criminals. "The death penalty creates a hierarchy of victims that somehow seems to say that somebody's loss is greater than somebody else's," Renny says. Manny Babbitt's death certificate deems it "justifiable homicide." But the Babbitts and the White-Myers family agree that the "eye-for-an-eye" mentality perpetuates an endless domino reaction.

The Back Gate

When the minivan pulled in, about a dozen members of the Babbitt family were waiting, huddled together, bracing themselves against the night wind. Donna and Allen joined them. Naomi and Derrel sat in the backseat, witnessing the scene they had hoped to avoid. Jesse Morris got another call on his cell phone. Everyone turned to watch. Jesse listened and nodded. Then he walked over to Donna and whispered something. Donna started pounding on his chest. Her hands went up to her face and she let out a wail. Jesse, Allen, and Donna's son Charles tried to restrain her, but Donna broke free and bolted off toward the dark waters where a cliff dropped off into the San Francisco Bay. Before she reached the edge, the three men caught up with her and held her while she wept. Then Charles slowly walked her back. Jesse climbed back into the minivan. He turned around to Naomi and Derrel. "I'll take you to your car now," he said. ●

GABRIELLE BANKS is a writer in San Francisco. She has written about the death penalty for National Public Radio affiliate KQED FM and the *Los Angeles Times*. Her article on Bill Babbitt, "My Brother's Guilt Became My Own," appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* in January.

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Enduring Bureaucracy

Harold Orlans

SURELY, A SECTOR of the Inferno is reserved for bureaucrats. Bound together with unburnable paper chains, they shuffle along, hopeless, exhausted, in an endless, hell-girdling queue with neither head nor tail. Unworthy of Satan's attention, their computerized torments are inflicted randomly by incompetent programmers.

A central theme in conservatives' attack on government (it takes your money; restricts your freedom; acts, like Tolstoy's Napoleon, in ignorance it mistakes for knowledge) is the scorn of "distant bureaucrats." Nearby bureaucrats are not more admired. Anarchists' hostility to government exceeds that of conservatives: as George Woodcock puts it in *Anarchism*, "government must die before freedom can live." The confidence in government that liberals and socialists share emphasizes the goals of public programs, but often disregards the humdrum realities of their administration and maladministration, upon which the programs can stumble. Former vice president Al Gore's efforts at "reinventing government" would have been more convincing if they had led not merely to fewer employees but to demonstrably better services.

Bureaucracy is endemic; its ills and aggravations are as rife in private as in governmental affairs. The magical market cannot eradicate the very plague it spawns. Its symptoms reflect the size of an organization, the workload of frontline clerks, the difficulty of monitoring (let alone changing) their conduct, the greater devotion to profit than to customer satisfaction, the emphasis on gross quantifiable measures of performance. If similar conditions produce similar effects in most organizations, hapless citizens will encounter similar aggravations wherever they turn. Postindustrial bureaucracy is no more responsive than industrial bureaucracy; it may be more insufferable because more automated.

Though I live half an hour from the Pentagon, the Social Security Administration, and other vast government bureaucracies, I grapple more often with private than public bureaucracy and cannot decide which is worse. Perhaps private, because you have, or feel you have, less recourse. Fortunately, the typical bureaucratic impasse, injustice, or folly is frustrating but not life threatening. You can't devote your life to rectifying it. An attempt to do so can generate so many additional aggravations that you are better off trying to forget the one you have. Frustrations of this order are the hair shirt of life, worn in all nations and economies—agrarian or industrial; autocratic or democratic; feudal, capitalist, or communist.

Being so common, so much a part of everyday life, they seldom become political issues. Friends with whom I discuss them quickly lose interest. They get exercised about global warming, affirmative action, elections, Israeli or Russian affairs, but regard the crimes and misdemeanors of bureaucracy as inescapable facts of life, like sparrows and weather.

To what extent are they? The question is worth exploring. I will detail irritating or bruising encounters with public and private bureaucracies, and then consider what might be done about them.

Mostly Public Bureaucracies

Income tax is the bane of all government haters, and you need not hate the government to hate the tax preparation process. When the time comes to write the four checks for current and estimated federal and state tax, I wince but am relieved that the labor is done. The preparatory work is the most troubling: sorting receipts, hunting for and finding no

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records, having to estimate and especially to allocate expenditures and income. Are they charitable or professional, income or capital gain? At every point, decision, uncertain decision based on unclear rules, inadequate information, and ignorance. Why, having never chosen the profession, must we become accountants every spring? I pay one to prepare the forms, but why should this be necessary? How do careless people who keep few receipts manage? How do blind, senile, peripatetic, and forgetful people manage? A former bookkeeper sorts papers for months, calculates and recalculates expenditures to the penny, never finishes on time, gets an extension, and pays a penalty. The Internal Revenue Service is a cross under which she staggers half the year. Is her character, not the IRS, to blame? The government cares not a whit for character.

Health worries are an unhappy fact of age. Friends wrinkle and wilt; their hearing and sight and energy weaken; they fuss about food and drink, their digestion, bowels, bladder, late hours, sleep. They—we—tire, sigh, and creak, visit doctors, take pills, write wills, have operations, and, freed at last of doctors and taxes, expire. My wife and I are in tolerable health and are not hypochondriacs. Yet in the last year, between us we have seen nine doctors, three surgeons, and two dentists. Some are solicitous, most are conscientious. Financially, their—and our—accounts are a mess (except for my dentist: with no dental insurance, I present a Visa card, pay on the spot, and that is the end of it). Thick piles of blue and black notices from BlueCross/BlueShield and Medicare, plus hospital and doctors' bills, and checks for overpayment have reduced me to total ignorance of what I owe and am owed. "Read Your Medicare Summary Notice carefully for accuracy of dates, services, and amounts billed" the form says; and, on the back side, "Important Information About Your Medicare Part B Medical Insurance Benefits." BlueCross offers a toll free number with "access to registered nurses who can help you assess your symptoms," explanations of eleven "Terms You Should Know" (coinsurance, precertification penalty, catastrophic protection, etc.), and "access [to] other health resources on-line at www.fepblue.org." The nation has more incomprehensible languages than New Guinea, and the number of translators available when needed rarely meets the demand.

"This is Not a Bill" BlueCross says. The bills come from doctors and hospitals—rather, from the billing henchpeople posted at the entrance or exit of every medical facility. I recently received a bill for a procedure that was performed two years ago and returned it because of several obvious errors. The American Medical Association warns about the horrendous red tape of national health systems, but can it be worse than the red tape of our present system? On one hospital visit, I was questioned by three different record-takers, none of whom seemed to know about the other two. Decades ago, while my former wife was on another floor giving birth to our second son, I was detained in the hospital lobby supplying financial particulars so that if we both died upon seeing the bill, the hospital would be paid by our heirs. Billing and rebilling; making and correcting errors; copying and shuffling financial and medical papers between doctors, hospitals, Medicare, insurers, payers, and payees; producing and sustaining the machines, repairers, programmers, and operators who spew forth this paper must decimate forests, speed global warming, and consume a major portion of the nation's health costs. The potentates responsible for this postindustrial monstrosity have places reserved for them in Satan's infernal queue.

In the 1960s, my wife worked in a California state agency and at the University of California, San Francisco. She held neither job long enough (five years) to qualify for a retirement annuity, but both together sufficed. At age sixty-five, she inquired about her benefits. The state agency confirmed her employment but UC said she had withdrawn from the system and had been sent a check reimbursing her payments. She had no record or recollection of the check; UC had a record of issuing it but not of its being cancelled: a glaring invitation to fraud. UC had destroyed the records! A protracted series of phone calls and letters to ever higher administrators ended in silence, the first and last resort of bureaucracy. We hired a lawyer. Eventually, after a seemingly in-

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terminable contest between bureaucratic delay and human survival, the annuity was recognized and payment begun.

The U.S. Postal Service is a monumental organization with some thirty thousand post offices and eight hundred thousand employees, far more than any government agency except the Defense Department. I was once staff to a panel of prominent citizens that evaluated postal services. The panel concluded that discourtesy is more common in big than small post offices. In the latter, "human contact occurs . . . 'please' and 'thank you' are said, and postal business is conducted in a friendly manner. In the former, queues are longer and patience shorter, employees too often talk with one another, neglect the public, and proceed at what seems a too deliberate pace." Our small local post office gives good, courteous service; potted plants add a homelike touch and make the occasional short wait more pleasant; when you reach the counter, you meet a live, often smiling, clerk. Still, if I inquire about a missing parcel or the failure to confirm delivery of a registered letter, postal officials prove to be prize graduates of the College of Bureaucracy: someone else, never the person I talk to, is always responsible.

In the District of Columbia, garbage overflows on sidewalks and alleys so that rats flourish. Leave aside the streets that armed police will not enter unaccompanied: rats nest near the church once attended by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Late one night, I saw a spineless cat shrink from a large rat that lumbered from gutter to sidewalk and into a crevice under a fashionable restaurant. It dined better than many residents. Each spring, the streets are pocked with potholes like no man's land. Drivers can face awesome queues and repeat visits at the Motor Vehicle Department. One resident, ticketed for lacking a residential parking permit that was plainly displayed on his windshield, received, months later, a reminder to renew the permit together with a notice to pay the fine for not having it. There is a dangerous shortage of fire engines. Relations between residents and police are often tense; gang gunfire kills targeted victims and bystanders alike. Police are so dilatory investigating murders that suspects murder again. Schools are in constant crisis with decrepit buildings and equipment, violence and outrageous conduct, the turnover and shortage of staff, frequent changes in top management, and congressional and court intrusions. The child welfare agency was in such chaos that staff did not know where they had placed abused and neglected children. Some children were housed in an office building, violating a court order. When the agency director ignored a summons to appear in District court, she was arrested, handcuffed, and brought before the judge.

The licensing of doctors, nurses, physical therapists, dentists, dental hygienists, social workers, and other health professionals takes at most two weeks in Maryland and Virginia; in D.C., from one to nine months. Applicants say that their inquiries and submissions are lost or unanswered; their phone calls ring and ring or yield conflicting answers.

Mostly Private Bureaucracies

Private bureaucracies are at least as exasperating as public.

Electricity, supplied by Pepco (Potomac Electric Power Company), is unreliable. Power lines run through trees that bow and break in every storm. With and without known cause, blackouts of minutes or hours are common. During one protracted winter outage, we had to abandon our heatless home, spend two nights in a motel, and then restock the fridge. Two winters ago, some areas went without power for more than a week. Pepco's response? It distributed a brochure detailing the cost of operating a home generator and the appropriate size for various appliances. As another winter approached, a full-page Pepco ad declared, "we're . . . 99.97 percent reliable . . . .But we can't prevent. . .high winds or heavy snow or ice . . ." Nor, apparently, can it put lines underground.

Phone charges, and the company's explanation of them, are mystifying. "[T]he price for your Optional Wire Maintenance Plan for inside wire maintenance will increase from $1.25 to $2.45 per line per month . . . . By paying this charge, you will be letting us know that you have decided to continue your protection under the plan . . . .The plan covers repairs to

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all standard inside wire and jack(s) covered by the plan as described in the Terms and Conditions of the plan." Five "plans"! What are "the Terms and Conditions"? You can spend inordinate time learning the answers or simply accept the charges, like traffic jams, television ads, background "music," and noisy lawnmowers, as a cost of modern living. Billed $16.10 for a twenty-minute evening phone call to the Bronx, I protested to Sprint Customer Service and asked for an explanation. I received no reply.

The assault teams who release laboratory animals from their cages should mount a campaign to disable the automated answering systems that shield agencies, companies, and stores from the public. To be put on perpetual hold and force-fed music is inhumane; given a set of inapplicable choices, I feel that a door has been slammed in my face.

I HAD AN excruciating encounter with one automated medical answering "service." My sister was enrolled in the George Washington University Health Plan. She had an ear infection and could not hear on the phone. Without determining that she was already on medication, a GWU doctor prescribed an antibiotic. After taking it, she phoned me to say she felt dizzy. At her place, I read the prescription instructions: if you become dizzy, call your doctor *immediately*. I phoned and got a sequence of automated choices with no provision for callers from a rotary phone. However, dialing "operator" prompted the message, "All George Washington primary care associate operators are busy right now. Your call is important to us. Please stay on the line and your call will be answered by the next available operator." I waited, no one answered; dialed again, again no one; again; and yet again. Disobeying a message that assigned one line to referring physicians, I spoke to a woman who hung up. After forty minutes, I reached a nurse who advised that my sister stop the antibiotic, which, of course, she had already done. I never spoke to a doctor. I reported this experience to Dr. Alan Wasserman, medical director of the GWU Health Plan and suggested he add a line with a live operator for emergencies. He did not reply.

Phones are an indispensable, ineradicable nuisance with their dunning, dinner-time calls; cheery "How are you today, Harold?" greetings by strangers; and automated sales pitches. Alexander Bell's wondrous invention has become an affliction that rings when you want silence and emits a busy signal or recorded message when you want to talk to someone. Telephone tag can last so long you forget why it started. Some jacks are inaccessible and some phones unsilenceable.

Renewal notices commence half a year before a subscription expires, and fresh invitations to subscribe arrive frequently. Unless you keep tidy records—you should be a bookkeeper for the private sector as well as for the IRS—you can pay twice for the same magazine. I repay excessive solicitations by posting empty prepaid envelopes and letting the subscription lapse for a period, renewing later at the reduced rate offered to new subscribers. Why are regular subscribers penalized by not-so-smart marketers?

Every donation generates countless additional requests—not an incentive to donate again. A conscientious, church-going acquaintance is distressed by the competitive practices of charitable agencies, convinced that their failure to limit solicitations and to cooperate with one another will ultimately damage their causes. Nonprofit cultural, educational, and intellectual institutions can operate in the same maddeningly mechanized way as commercial and governmental bureaucracies. I once clipped half a dozen address labels from duplicative catalogs and sent them to the business manager of a leading press, whom I had met, hoping to reduce our volume of waste and save her some postage. The flow of catalogs continued unabated.

A basic principle of bureaucracy is, follow a rule known only to you; don't explain, reexamine, or change it; and don't say what it is. Did this rule or simple witlessness operate when I sought permission to reprint a *Washington Post* op-ed article? I phoned and got an automated instruction to write. I wrote and got no response. I phoned again and could not penetrate the automated messages. Then I remembered the blessed *Post* ombudsman. He had a phone, answered it, and promised that the per-

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missions editor would call. She did. Why had she not replied? Because the *Post* did not own the copyright of the article. Why hadn't she told me that?

E-mail can help you get a response from organizations and individuals who are sufficiently interested and efficient to respond; otherwise, it changes nothing and yields nothing or, at most, an automated reply. The comparative nonresponse rates of mail and E-mail inquiries have yet to be compiled. Fathom, Columbia University's new Internet venture, which invites public inquiries about the "authenticated knowledge" it promises to deliver to "a worldwide audience," has not replied to a simple question.

The glories of the Internet are trumpeted from so many pulpits that its hazards and failings can be neglected. Error spreads rapidly and is archived permanently. An excess of information produces not meaningful communication and knowledge but noise, chaos, and, perhaps, panic and disaster.

COMPETITION, it is said, lowers prices, improves quality, spurs efficiency and service, and makes our economy the wonder of nations. In abstract theory, there may be something to this, but in daily reality it is true of certain goods and services, not others. I can choose a gas station, supermarket, restaurant, department store, bookstore (real or virtual), or airline; that is, I can conveniently get the same or similar food, book, and flight at different (not always significantly different) prices. Many advertising lures only camouflage the meaninglessness of choosing one touted service over another.

Insurance, airline, and credit card companies have large promotional budgets and aggressive staffs. Every day's newspaper or mail brings offers of bargain flights; cheaper insurance; low interest loans, banks, and Visa cards. Read the small print and the bargain is less attractive. Read the regulations—but who can find, read, and comprehend all the incomprehensible regulations prepared by lawyers expert at obfuscation?—and the short-term lure can translate into a long-term cost. Do I have to change my insurance, credit card, and bank every month? Change or purported change, "innovation" or "progress" is the all-American vice. In the last six years, mergers and acquisitions have given me three new bank accounts and checkbooks, three new credit cards, and one new home insurer, all with compendious instructions and regulations. I long for a little stability, not more change.

The Two-Class System

I doubt that clever policy wonks or a mass consumer campaign led by a new Nader can eliminate all the aggravations I have related. They are grit in the mills of society and grit gets into the mills of every society. At best, we can hope to reduce it, to filter the bureaucratic air we all breathe; the filters must be changed often and monitored constantly. Too many new programs, products, and services receive undue promotion and insufficient careful implementation and maintenance. Schools of engineering, business, and policy prosper; schools of administration are deemed archaic. Enmeshed in bureaucratic webs, consumers need recourse to effective, independent agents and agencies: to inspectors, ombudsmen, consumer protection offices, legal aid, small and large claims courts. At present, these agencies are plainly, painfully inadequate.

The ills of public agencies must be taken seriously by voters and taxpayers as well as by legislators and civil servants; the ills of business, by investors, managers, and employees as well as by customers and clients. Are we ready to pay higher postage for better mail service, higher charges for more solicitous airline, store, and professional services? Then services may improve, if not as much as we would like. A degree of economy and efficiency may be sacrificed for a gain in courtesy and reliability. Put to a vote, will Americans prefer frequent aggravations to the cost of better goods and services? Or will we retain what we increasingly have today: two levels of service, first class for the well-to-do and coach (it can become steerage) for the rest?

Reviewing what money can and cannot buy is one way to assess what might be done to remedy the insults of bureaucracy. A wealthy couple need not wait on an actual or telephone queue; their secretary, chauffeur, chef, or assistant can do that if contacts and money don't

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open a privileged path for them. They use the most convenient, direct, and expensive flights; board first, relax or work in comfort en route; leave first and are met and driven or helicoptered to their destination; some travel in private chartered planes and yachts.

Affluent persons need not themselves struggle with the queues, red tape, impasses, delays, and errors of overburdened, indifferent, or incompetent bureaucrats; they can delegate these torments to personal staff and professional retainers: lawyers, accountants, household and money managers. Corporations, universities, and research institutes often hire experts to manage senior employees' medical bills; those who benefit from such services are spared much trouble—and the experts' knowledge of contracts and administrative procedures produces larger payments than others receive from health insurers. When personal mediators are absent, money can substitute: to the affluent, fines and penalties are simply a standard cost of dodging standard regulations.

The middle classes can afford only an occasional middle-class accountant and lawyer; the lower classes, an occasional pawnbroker and bonder. Lawyers and accountants need not hire other lawyers and accountants to act on their behalf. An experienced postal clerk, telephone operator, or nurse can negotiate obstacles that helpless novices confront with the postal service, phone company, or hospital. But the benefits of special knowledge are usually confined to one domain. A company director and janitor may both have the key to a private bathroom, but that is the only privilege they share. The value of wealth and power is the number and variety of doors it can open.

Remedies

Why are some bureaucracies good and efficient and others anything from middling to miserable? What can reasonably and feasibly be done to improve the latter?

The answer or, rather, answers to the first question are relatively easy and, for the most part, the same answers seem applicable to both private and public organizations. In a good bureaucracy, tasks are commensurate with human, financial, and technical resources; staff are qualified and content; managers and staff respect and may even like one another; their tasks are clear and sensible (perhaps also interesting and significant); and they get personal satisfaction (perhaps also recognition and reward) from doing them well. Many of these features are absent in a poorly functioning bureaucracy or, if present, are outweighed by other factors—an unreasonable workload, excessive demands of managers, deadeningly repetitive chores—that damage morale and performance.

THE IDEA OF a nation whose institutions—large and small, national and local, governmental, business, political, religious, cultural, educational, scientific, and charitable—all have competent and contented personnel, function smoothly, and meet current and long-term obligations well is utopian. There is no danger of America's approaching that condition. Normally, the efficiency of our variegated institutions ranges from quiet reliability to tolerable or intolerable disorder. At times, major institutions (the Chicago mails in 1966, many campuses in the 1960s, air transportation and California electric power today) are close to collapse.

It is almost impossible to separate the ills of society—which, historically entrenched, will take historical forces to change—from the more readily correctable ills of a specific institution. If ill-spirited employees, rapacious owners and executives, and short-sighted supervisors and technicians are entrenched in and around national and local institutions, the best measures to improve them will have only short-term effects. No institution is permanently secure and stable; all are periodically jarred and require repair and maintenance.

A bureaucracy that readily and willingly addresses complaints, corrects errors, replaces defective products, and remedies deficient service is functioning well. Having cited impenetrable bureaucracies that disregard complaints, I should here note that others handle them admirably. Visa provides an astonishingly efficient global service that handles card thefts and wrong charges expeditiously. Three times in two years I have had to change a card number that an unknown villain had acquired and

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misused; each time, the improper charges were cancelled and a new card was issued promptly. Giant Food, the Washington area supermarket chain, accepts the return of mistaken, damaged, or spoiled purchases, no questions asked, and refunds cash on the spot. My prize example of good, indeed generous, customer service involves Sears. When I returned a word processor for repair under a service contract, the model was no longer being manufactured; after five years' use, Sears repaid the full purchase price, about $800.

The *Washington Post* runs an excellent column of complaints and queries on road repairs, signs, lights, and traffic impediments; the columnist, Dr. Gridlock, usually obtains an answer and remedial action from a responsible official. The *Post* would perform a public service by adding similar columns on government agencies and private businesses.

Neighborhood residents' groups often invite local leaders—school principals, police and health officers, developers, real estate executives—to discuss common concerns. Such issues as school and construction schedules or bus routes and police patrols may thus be resolved. But less tractable conflicts (for example, the location of new roads and schools, the size of the police or school budget—and of the property tax) must be fought out in county and state offices, courts, and elections. Teacher and hospital worker unions have formed citizen alliances, arguing that higher wages and increased staffing will improve the quality of education and patient care. Part-time faculty and teaching assistants are making similar efforts in higher education.

Where the rich retain personal and professional staff to deal with bureaucracies, others must resort to public and voluntary services. Local legislators and congressional representatives may help citizens press claims against unjust government bureaucrats. Pro bono lawyers, small claims courts, and volunteers for religious, health, and social agencies help the poor, incompetent, and elderly meet their obligations to, and obtain their rights from intransigent bureaucracies. Some institutions help many in their orbit: for example, law students give legal help to other students and poor area residents. Volunteers from the American Association of Retired Persons help elderly people with their financial records and bills.

Earlier, I noted the sorry state of the District of Columbia. Montgomery County borders the District, yet its schools, garbage removal, road repairs, police and ambulance services, professional and auto licensing are generally far better. Once again, money makes the difference: the county is wealthier, pays higher salaries, and has an easier time recruiting good employees. The District is poorer, larger, more complex (in effect, a state, county, and city), and, beholden to Congress for an appropriation in lieu of the property taxes that federal agencies do not pay, less able to govern itself. Cronyism and corruption marred former mayor Marion Barry's regime, and it takes forceful means, time, and continued vigilance to clean and keep clean a messy, crowded house. A Montgomery County official speaks of a "bureaucratic culture." Experienced county staff, she says, know one another and think of themselves as part of a well-run government; District staff do not.

Final responsibility for bureaucratic mismanagement often lodges with national politicians and executives. The political and economic climate visibly affects the quality of services and such tiresome matters as queues, busy phone signals, and unanswered complaints. A few examples illustrate the point.

Local employee unions attribute queuing for medical and welfare services to staff shortages. During contract negotiations, they seek higher staffing levels; managers resist, charge "featherbedding," and claim that staffing is a management prerogative. Under present labor law, the legitimacy of a union's negotiating staff levels can be appealed to the National Labor Relations Board, which is more likely while under Republican than Democratic control to side with employers.

Deregulation, that purported cure for countless economic and social ills, fostered lower airfares and, in a strong economy, boosted air travel so much as to overtax airport and airline facilities and passenger endurance. Accounts of overbooking; flight misinformation, delays, and diversions; passengers held captive on runways or forced to spend the night

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at airports have led to . . . a promised code of airline good conduct.

The United States spends vast sums on medical research, education, and care. The quality of medical knowledge, facilities, drugs, and physicians are not major political issues; the methods of financing and providing health care are. We have admirable care for those who can afford it and less admirable, truncated care for those who can't. I have mentioned the heavy weight of bureaucracy that burdens the whole system. Health maintenance organizations, Robert Kuttner writes, are "private bureaucracies hated by doctors and patients alike." Perhaps half of national health expenditures goes for actual care; the other half goes to administrators, advertisers, billers, and payers, those who produce and shuffle paper. According to Marcia Angell, former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine,* our health system "has by far the highest overhead costs in the world"; she favors a new system with a single or consolidated payer. Whatever the solution, the causes of the bureaucratic snafus, paper blizzards, service blockages, and treatment shortfalls are not just local but national, not just individual incompetence but a product of economic and social arrangements.

MODERN SOCIETY is built of bureaucracy as a wall is built of brick. It is the indispensable agent and inescapable pain of our lives. Managers and efficiency experts endlessly examine it, but, considering its importance and omnipresence, intellectuals have neglected its daily operations. Someone said it is the little things that keep us from doing big things. But most of our lives consist of little things; they give it a perceptible flavor, imperceptibly shape it, and can enhance or destroy it ("For want of a nail . . . ").

Efficient bureaucracies are necessary to a satisfactory society. To be sure, they must have a just and useful purpose. We are better off with incompetent than efficient tyrants and thieves. Farmhands, dressmakers, nurses, and teachers who work long hours for little money do better under lax rather than stringent managers. Employee resistance to exploitation accounts for some, but far from most, bureaucratic crimes and misdemeanors. The malfunctions of bureaucracies are symptoms of social malfunctions, sometimes local, sometimes national; they require close scrutiny, public disclosure, and all possible (formal and informal, political and civic) correction.

Among the good reasons to be rich are the special service and attention you can get, the queues and bottlenecks you can avoid. Money helps you use your time as you like, not as bureaucracies dictate. All citizens cannot enjoy these comforts, but all can receive fair and satisfactory service if that is deemed important and if the requisite financial and human resources are provided. Decent performance can be demanded of all institutions in a decent society. Derelict institutions can be rehabilitated; the insults and dangers with which they punish individuals and communities should not be ignored. ●

HAROLD ORLANS served on the founding board of *Dissent* and last wrote for the magazine in 1954. Since then, he has been, among other things, an analyst for the National Science Foundation, director of studies for the White House Conference on Children and Youth, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, special assistant to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and editor of the *Independent Scholar*. He thanks Michael Walzer, Lou Nayman, and Karen Spatz Orlansky for information and suggestions.

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Ivory Towers in the Marketplace

John Palattella

In 1997, Arthur Levine, the president of Columbia University's Teachers College, concluded a five-year national study of undergraduate attitudes about higher education. The study was like a cold shower, one made all the more jarring by the fact that Levine published his findings in the pages of *Daedalus*, the cerebral quarterly of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. College "is not as central to the lives of many of today's undergraduates as it was to previous generations," Levine wrote. "It is becoming just one of many activities in which they engage in every day. For many, college is not even the most important of these activities. Work and family often overshadow it." Students prefer relationships with schools similar to those "they already enjoyed with their bank, their gas company, their supermarket," Levine explained. They "want their colleges nearby and open during the hours most useful to them, preferably, around the clock. They want easy, accessible parking, no lines, and a polite, helpful, and efficient staff. For the most part, they are willing to comparison shop, placing a premium on time and money. They do not want to pay for activities and programs they do not use or can get elsewhere."

For nearly thirty years, the University of Phoenix has been providing just such a stripped-down, convenient version of college. Owned by the publicly traded Apollo Group, Phoenix is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. With around ninety campuses in nineteen states, it currently enrolls more than seventy thousand students. It has earned millions of dollars, and it happily regards students as "customers" shopping for vocational training and professional credentials. Phoenix is choosy about those customers: one must be at least twenty-three years old and employed to enroll. Phoenix is just as choosy about when and where it offers classes: in the evenings and on weekends, and in classrooms located in malls and industrial parks with rows of accessible parking. Like many for-profit and nonprofit schools, Phoenix is increasingly using the Web to deliver parts of its curriculum to students.

Oddly enough, it wasn't until the late 1990s that Phoenix caught the attention of the press. Some stories were nothing more than a big wet kiss from hacks whose love affair with the New Economy had led them to Phoenix's doorstep. Other stories were more circumspect, but they read like the musings of a feverish Rip Van Winkle who had awakened to find his hallowed marketplace of ideas turned into, well, a marketplace. Critics assailed Phoenix for sacrificing the classics to commerce, for transforming the vale of soul-making into a vocational forcing-house.

Despite their passion, these critics were wrong to pin the downsizing of the humanities on the rise of proprietary schools like Phoenix. They failed to notice a broad trend in higher education, one documented by James Engell and Anthony Dangerfield. Since the late 1960s, the humanities have been neglected and downgraded at colleges and universities nationwide, even at schools with tweedy faculty, pastoral campuses, and bookstores well-stocked with Norton anthologies. Dangerfield and Engell note that students throng to subjects that make money, study money, or attract money—nursing, marketing, accounting, business administration. As far as the curriculum is concerned, the rise of vocation-oriented proprietary schools is but a symptom of a decades-long national trend. With many schools now serving as personnel offices for corporations, it's not just students

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at the University of Phoenix whose education hasn't prepared them to notice the irony of the Apollo Group's moniker.

I don't mean to suggest that proprietary schools don't pose serious threats to nonprofit schools. Phoenix certainly doesn't shrink from being the bad guy. Its president, John Sperling, never tires of boasting that "Wall Street is our endowment." In fact, last October, Apollo raised seventy million dollars from a stock sale to fund its distance-education efforts. (Apollo began trading on NASDAQ in 1994 at a split-adjusted price of $2.06; in early June 2001, it was trading at $34.) Still, however much Phoenix's Street credibility might tempt Sperling to outswagger Gordon Gekko, it would be a mistake to perceive the institution as a Godzilla that will trample higher education. If anything, Phoenix and its for-profit peers are more like a colony of termites quietly boring away at the economic and social framework of higher education.

To understand why, the Van Winkles must not only wipe the sleep from their eyes but also shift their gaze from the nation's elite institutions, whose billion-dollar endowments and hoary reputations as bastions of the liberal arts mostly insulate them from the for-profit threat. Of course, elite institutions are not without their own serious structural problems, a point brought home by the graduate-student unionization efforts at Yale University, New York University, and elsewhere. But beyond the precincts of New Haven and Greenwich Village, there's another battle shaping up over the future of higher education, and it's taking place at the middle- and low-tier liberal arts colleges and universities forced to compete with proprietary schools like Phoenix.

ONE REASON has to do with the very unconventional economics of higher education. A normal business sells its goods at a price greater than cost; colleges and universities sell higher education at a price substantially less than cost. As Gordon Winston, head of the Project for the Economics of Higher Education at Williams College, has explained, this means that many students in the United States are subsidized by their colleges. The difference between price (or the amount paid by a student) and cost is the subsidy, and it is covered by what Winston dubs a school's "donative resources"—gifts, endowment earnings, federal appropriations, and other assets. In 1995, the average nonprofit college and university in the United States produced a $12,500 education that it sold to the student for a price of $3,700, the difference being a subsidy of $8,800, or nearly two-thirds of the total cost. "It's as if a Ford Taurus that cost the dealer $20,000 to put on the showroom floor were routinely sold for $6,700," Winston says.

The crux of Winston's research is a ranking of the nation's 3,300 institutions by the size of their student subsidy. In the top decile, the average cost of one year of college is $29,894 and the average price $5,782, leaving a subsidy of $24,112. Students at these schools pay on average only twenty cents on the dollar for their education. In the middle range, students pay only five cents more on the dollar: the average cost is $10,444 and the average price is $2,716, leaving a subsidy of $7,728. In the bottom decile, however, students pay nearly 70 percent of their costs. At these schools, the average cost is $8,419 and the average price is $5,799, the difference being a $2,620 subsidy. The conclusion is obvious: subsidies are ubiquitous within higher education, but their size is relative to an institution's wealth. "Higher education is a sharply hierarchical industry in which cost, price, and subsidies vary dramatically among schools," Winston says.

But the subsidy is more than a sign of the unequal distribution of wealth within higher education. It is also a barrier to entry to the higher education market itself. A subsidy, Winston explains, "shows how much an entering school would have to lower costs in order to compete with [an existing school] on cost and price, nose to nose, and still make a profit." That is, the size of a subsidy is a measure of market vulnerability, with a high subsidy creating a steep barrier to entry for competitors like Phoenix and a low subsidy being a negligible hurdle.

Winston groups low-subsidy schools according to university, college, or two-year and public or private status to create a picture of those most vulnerable to competition. Among the 259 schools with the lowest subsidies,

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more than 80 percent are private; among those 217 schools, 66 are comprehensive universities, 51 are specialized institutions (religious, business, art, and tribal schools), and 49 are liberal arts colleges. But these numbers don't tell the whole story.

One must also consider the highly vulnerable institutions as a percent of the types of schools in the study population. As Winston explains, "with a total of 120 private two-year colleges in our data, 32 percent of them are in the bottom subsidy decile, as are 28 percent of private doctoral and 27 percent of private comprehensive universities, 25 percent of private specialized schools, 10 percent of private liberal arts colleges and 3 percent of private research universities." Few private liberal arts colleges and research universities, and even fewer public institutions, appear to be highly vulnerable to competition. Winston's analysis of the 777 schools in the bottom three deciles tells the same story.

HIGHER EDUCATION is labor intensive, with some economists estimating that labor accounts for around 70 percent of an institution's operating costs. The upshot for the low-subsidy schools is that although they have roughly the same labor costs as high-subsidy schools, their relative lack of wealth greatly reduces their ability to defray the cost of providing education. Consequently, they are very vulnerable to proprietary schools like the University of Phoenix. Phoenix has very low overhead. It owns little land or buildings, with the bulk of its classrooms being rented office space. It owns no library, but operates a Web site where its students can locate "content" germane to their studies. Phoenix is also tenure free, and it operates its classrooms like a franchise. It employs a small cadre of full-time faculty to design and update its curriculum every few years. Uniform courses are dispatched to an army of more than four thousand adjunct instructors, who are required to be employed in the field in which they teach. Depending on their experience, adjuncts are paid a few thousand dollars per course, which means that the combined salary of two Phoenix adjuncts equals the entire student subsidy at a lower tier nonprofit. Phoenix is a very lean operation.

Many a low-subsidy school has little choice but to compete with Phoenix once it opens a campus in its region. (Before Phoenix can set up shop, it must be approved by a state's higher education commission.) Despite the rhetoric about the liberal arts that fills their brochures, these institutions, particularly small, regional religious and secular colleges, have survived the last few decades mainly by offering increasingly more vocational and continuing-education courses. Since its curriculum leaves it with little room for maneuvering, the only way a low-subsidy institution can compete with Phoenix is by slashing its labor costs. One option is to rely even more on part-time, untenured instructors who enjoy scant academic freedom, have little discretion over curriculum planning, and participate little, if at all, in institutional governance.

Of course, an institution can attempt to outflank Phoenix, but that requires a large amount of capital, something in short supply at low-subsidy schools. How much capital? In 1998, New York University decided to compete with Phoenix and commercial courseware companies like UNext and Pensare by building on its experience in continuing education. At a price tag of $21.5 million, it launched NYUonline, a for-profit subsidiary that produces and markets Web-based vocational courses to corporations and working adults. As at Phoenix, course design and instruction are done in a piecemeal fashion. An NYU professor creates the syllabus and chooses the readings, a technician puts the material on-line, and a part-time instructor interacts with students in on-line chat sessions. A recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* described a day in the life of one such instructor, Sally Silberman. During a hectic eight hours of pitching courses to corporate clients and supervising student chats, Silberman found a few moments to reflect on her job. "I love what I am doing," she confided to the *Chronicle*'s reporter. "I love not only the teaching, but the selling of it."

All the humanists should think twice before dismissing Silberman with a groan. OK, go ahead and groan, but ignore the likes of the University of Phoenix, NYUonline, and other proprietary schools at your peril. These schools

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signal the ascent of a very troubling set of beliefs: that universities, despite their unconventional economics, are best managed as a profit-driven business; that education is, inherently, a consumer good subject to the whims of the marketplace; that faculty are entrepreneurs, even salespeople. And don't assume that for-profits are without a chorus. Academic administrators like Levine now routinely echo the sentiments of people like Sally Silberman, whose motto is "either move with the times or die by the sword."

Of course, critics should not move out of the way, but they shouldn't fall on their swords, either. Little will come from attacking for-profits on the grounds that vocational study has no place in higher education. After all, when Congress passed the Morrill Act in 1862, it instructed the states to establish institutions "to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes." That mandate chartered many of the nation's land-grant universities, such as those in California, Wisconsin, Maryland, and Illinois. The mantra of "practical education" has only grown louder over the last century, as American universities have developed in a pragmatic, business-minded culture that justifies education primarily as a means to an end.

What can be attacked, however, is the pride of place granted vocational study by for-profits and their nonprofit imitators. I worry less about the existence of the for-profit niche than about its market-driven, vocational ethos poisoning the intellectual values that surround it. And the poison can be something as simple as neglect. I think that one reason traditional universities want to emulate for-profits is simply because the latter have cast aside some of the most central—and ticklish—functions of higher education: Their purpose is not to promote innovative scholarship, academic freedom, individual reflection, or any number of other noble pursuits. It is simply to turn a profit by training students and awarding them with a credential.

The poverty of that mission should compel us to ask a fundamental question: What do we stand to lose if the distinction between education and training evaporates altogether? "Do we care any more whether colleges and universities are custodians of collective, diverse cultures," Engell and Dangerfield ask, "whether they record, teach, and transmit traditions, and give us the linguistic and symbolic tools to express our veneration, criticism, and contribution to our culture, to make connections with its variety, to examine its checkered past and to imagine its possible future?" Do we care any more whether it's mostly top-tier institutions that have the resources to be effective custodians? Do we care any more that, due to pressures to be more commercial and service-oriented, universities are shrinking from undertaking the kind of open-ended basic research that led to some of the most path-breaking discoveries of the previous century?

In one of the more boosterish moments of his essay, Levine writes, "There is an underlying belief that colleges and universities are making precisely the same mistake that the railroads made. The railroads believed they were in the railroad business; they focused on making bigger and better railroads. The problem is that they were actually in the transportation industry and, as a result, were derailed by the airlines. Similarly, it can be said that higher education is making the mistake of thinking it is in the campus business, when in reality it is in the very lucrative education business." For-profit universities, Levine reminds his readers, are not making that mistake.

If a rhetoric and argumentation course is ever taught at the University of Phoenix, Levine's sentences could serve as a textbook example of false analogy and hasty generalization. Notice, for instance, how he reduces the duration of an undergraduate's education to the notion of a service, "the campus business." (And this is his characterization of the realm threatened by for-profits!) Levine does get one fact right: colleges and universities exist in the marketplace, if only because they compete with each other for students, professors, donations, and research grants, among other things. But that's no reason to think that, like for-profits, they should become slaves to the vocational marketplace or nothing but markets themselves. ●

JOHN PALATTELLA writes for *Dissent, Lingua Franca, Newsday,* and other publications.

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Imagining Marketopia

Terence Ball

WHAT IS THE proper place for the market? In the history of social and political thought, this seemingly simple question has elicited many different answers. That the answers vary so widely suggests that the question is not as simple as it seems. Aristotle, and later the Church Fathers, held that the market has a greatly restricted but legitimate place in social life. Bernard de Mandeville and Adam Smith were prepared to give markets a much less restricted role. Karl Marx wanted to abolish the market altogether. Today, however, a school of writers and publicists has emerged that holds that most, if not all, politically imposed limitations on markets are both inefficient and unjust. Liberate the market, they say, and let it work its magic in all spheres of life—education, energy, the environment, health care, crime and punishment, fire and police protection, transportation, and other areas as well.

This libertarian turn is a genuinely new wrinkle in intellectual history, and is hardly confined to the academy. Since the "revolutions" of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, this way of thinking has been put into (admittedly selective) practice. "Privatization" and "deregulation" became official watchwords and defining features of public policy. To the question, What is the market's place? the answer is: (almost) anywhere and everywhere.

My purpose here is not to ask how well these policies have worked in practice, but to try instead to expose some of the questionable features of market thinking, especially when applied to spheres of social life, traditionally regarded as off limits. I'll do this by means of a thought experiment: the construction of an imaginary society in which the market has invaded and occupied every sphere.

IMAGINE A not-so-distant future society called Marketopia. In the middle of its capital city of Nozickia lies Becker Square, which can be reached via the city's main thoroughfare, a toll road named Liberty Lane. For a modest admission fee, one can enter the square and, for a further fee, gain entry to the mausoleum containing the embalmed body of Gary Becker, national hero and saint. "What Price Immortality?" asks the sign over the glass coffin. And it immediately answers: 43,287 Rothbards (the national currency, named for the sainted Murray), the amount raised so far by the sale of relics—items belonging to or once touched by the late economist and demigod.

In Marketopia, everything is for sale. Drugs and sexual services are reasonably priced, of course, but then so are most things, because there is a market in every conceivable good and service. There is, for example, a vigorous market in human organs. Organ brokers walk the halls of the private hospitals, keeping close watch on the dying and making deals with family members whose grief is greatly offset by the prospect of profiting from the death of their loved one. Those awaiting organ transplants are prepared to pay the going price for a heart, lung, kidney, or other vital organ. Typically, competing organ brokers play one patient off against the other, thereby raising the price and ensuring that the organ goes to the highest bidder. Most Marketopians opt for a designation on their drivers license, saying that in the event of their death, their organs should be auctioned off. They shake their heads in disbelief when told that there was a time when human blood and organs were freely donated by community-minded altruists—and typically ask what the words "community" and "altruist" mean, as

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these are not in current usage (though they are in the dictionary).

The language spoken in Marketopia bears a close resemblance to English, at least in vocabulary and spelling, though not in the meaning of many words. Marketopian dictionaries are helpful here. Under "society," for example, the entry reads: "Fictitious entity believed by collectivists to be real. See also Public." Under "justice": "Noninterference in market transactions; actions, arrangements, and/or decisions conducive to the functioning of free markets." And under "injustice" the obverse: "Interference with and/or regulation of market transactions."

Many Marketopians are quite bright, having been taught to read and calculate from an early age. Children in the private kindergartens learn their ABCs and Marketopian values together. "Now children," the teacher intones in a cheerful voice, "what does A stand for?" To which her eager young charges respond in unison, "*Assets*!" B is for Bank, C is for Capital, M is for Market (of course), P is for Private property, and so on. The teaching of mathematics is even more impressive. By age six most children have mastered decimals and percentages and can calculate compound interest. By age eight they are well versed in statistics and by ten most have mastered rational-choice theory.

In Marketopia all roads are toll roads, fire and police protection is provided by private companies for a fee, according to how much protection, delivered how fast, the consumer desires or can afford. If you can't afford, or choose to forgo, fire protection, the fire company will, in the event of a fire at your house, appear with hoses, hooks, and ladders—and the fire captain will engage you in fast-paced negotiations about how much you think his company's services are now worth. These negotiated post-fire fees (as they are called) tend to be very high, often running into the tens or even hundreds of thousands of Rothbards. If you're lucky, several competing companies will appear on the scene.

If an intruder lurks downstairs you need only phone a private policing company to which you pay a monthly fee and a car and officer will be dispatched. If, however, you don't have a police-protection policy (or a pistol in your nightstand drawer), you can call a company and negotiate a price over the telephone. Uninsured and understandably hysterical consumers typically pay premium prices for post-intrusion police protection. In several instances these hastily negotiated fees have amounted to millions of Rothbards. So, not surprisingly, ads for policing companies emphasize the importance of being fully protected and paid up in advance. Only then can you be assured that your assailant will be apprehended. After being tried in private court before a judge—juries, being slow and inefficient (and unfair to would-be jurors, who are in any event too busy with their own affairs to serve), are never used in Marketopia, even in capital cases—the wrongdoer will be incarcerated in one of the private prisons run by Burglar King, McPrison, and other franchises.

Some activities considered criminal in other societies are common and entirely legal in Marketopia. Extortion, for example, is regarded as a free-market transaction in which one person pays another for the service of remaining silent. The sale of cocaine, heroin, hashish, and other drugs is viewed in a similar light. The only actions punishable by law are transgressions against the person or property of another.

THE PRIVATE prisons of Marketopia are both profitable and popular. Prisons serve not only to punish criminals but to entertain a vast television audience. One program, called "Con Cam," broadcasts videos of prisoners as they go about their daily business—making homemade knives in the prison workshop, extorting money from weaker prisoners, and buying drugs from the guards (perfectly legal of course). But the most widely watched televised spin-off of the private prison system is the hugely popular "Who Wants to Live?" A month before his or her execution, the condemned prisoner is introduced to the viewing audience, which then submits suggestions for the manner and method of execution—hanging, firing squad, disembowelment, drawing and quartering, and other even more ingenious means. This supplies special incentive to the prisoner and his or her allies in the anti-death penalty movement to raise money

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for release or at least commutation of the death sentence. The ensuing bidding war is fierce and frenetic. In most instances, the prisoners lose (unless of course they are wealthy enough to outbid their opponents). Two days before the scheduled execution, a final vote is taken. The rule is, "One Rothbard, one vote." Some viewers—especially members of the victim's family—are prepared to pay thousands or even millions of Rothbards to ensure the grisliest of deaths for the condemned. This in turn ensures an even larger viewing audience and therefore increased advertising revenues.

Marketopians love to be entertained. Most television stations do not broadcast depressing programs; there isn't much of a market. This means that reports about floods, famines, airplane crashes, and Middle Eastern politics are not featured on the most widely watched news programs (although they are shown again and again on the Catastrophe Channel). The news and entertainment divisions within broadcasting were merged long ago and the former made a minor part of the latter. One of the most popular shows is "The Happy News Hour" on PBS, the Private Broadcasting Service.

ALTHOUGH there are lonely people in Marketopia, they needn't remain lonely for long if they have a desire for company and the means to pay for it. One of Marketopia's more thriving enterprises is Rent-a-Friend. For ten Rothbards an hour one can rent an "acquaintance," for twenty-five a "friend," for fifty a "good friend," and for a hundred a "best friend." For those who prefer nonhuman companionship, Rent-a-Pet (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Rent-a-Friend) provides dogs, cats, goldfish, gerbils, pot-bellied pigs, and many other animals for periods ranging from one day to the lifetime of the animal. Renters who tire of or wish to trade their animal companions for another species can do so. Or, for a small additional fee, they can have their rented pets painlessly euthanized.

Other useful services are also available for a fee. For example, from Sycophants, Inc. you can rent a flatterer to follow you around and praise you either in private (for fifty Rothbards per hour) or in public (a hundred per hour). For the athletically inclined, there is Losers, Ltd. From Losers you can rent a partner to play tennis or squash, one-on-one basketball, billiards, darts, and even poker, chess, and other more cerebral and sedentary games. Losers' slogan is "You win, we lose—guaranteed." Rates vary according to the game and other factors, for which there is a rather elaborate rate schedule. White basketball players, for example, pay premium rates to play against very tall black men who cannot jump or shoot accurately. Chess enthusiasts pay more to play against opponents with Russian names, who have accents to match.

On an even brighter note, love and marriage flourish in Marketopia. The marriage market and the marriage contract are important parts of Marketopian life. Dating services and marriage brokers abound. For the former, one fills out a form listing one's preferences for, say, a non-smoking, Caucasian, blonde, meat-eating jogger who is willing to consider having sex on the first date for a reasonable fee or exchange of services. Marriage is a more serious business, as assets are involved. The marriage contract stipulates what assets each partner will bring to the marriage, which assets they are willing to share, how frequently they will engage in sex (and what fee or exchange is involved), how many children they will have (and what the wife will charge the husband for the inconvenience of pregnancy and the pain of childbirth), and so on. Some especially wealthy men "upgrade" by exchanging older wives for newer and younger models; wealthy women do the same. The terms on which marriages are to be dissolved, upgraded, or added to (polygamy is perfectly legal) are specified in the marriage contract, which typically runs to forty or more closely printed pages and is periodically renegotiated.

Family values flourish in Marketopia, and children soon learn that the value of being a member of a family can be considerable. For example, a mother might ask her son to "Give Mommy a kiss." To which the son typically replies, "What's it worth to you?" The mother will then say something like, "Two Rothbards." "Three," he says flatly and firmly. She nods, and as he pecks her cheek, she opens her purse and says proudly with a warm maternal smile, "The best bargainer a mother ever had."

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Looking through private high school yearbooks reveals that some students are singled out for special meritorious mention as "Most Calculating" or "Shrewdest Negotiator." These youths can be expected to excel at Sumner University.

William Graham Sumner University—a private institution, as are all institutions in Marketopia—is not only "run like a business," it *is* a business, and a very profitable one at that. A grade of "A" can be purchased for the relatively modest sum of five hundred Rothbards, a "B" for four hundred, a "C" for three hundred. Professors—called SPs (short for "service providers")—are eager to teach large undergraduate courses because their salaries are determined by the number of students (called "customers"), whose "grade fees" go half to the SP and half to help maintain the institution. Sumner University has no philosophy department, in part because there is insufficient demand, but also because the subjects of ethics and political philosophy are included in the economics curriculum and restricted to works by Robert Nozick, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and a few other luminaries. There have long been rumors that some students meet secretly to read John Rawls, Karl Marx, Thomas More, and other authors excluded from the curriculum. The rumors appear to be unfounded, however, as acquaintance with these thinkers would hardly advance one's career and would therefore amount to a cost without a corresponding benefit.

All research at Sumner and other centers of higher learning is financed by large corporations. The tobacco industry supports research on smoking and health. Large pharmaceutical firms finance the study of drug safety and effectiveness. The chemical industry supports research on the toxicity of herbicides, pesticides, and other chemicals. The mining and timber industries support environmental research. And agribusiness firms are generous in funding work on the health and environmental effects of genetically engineered fruits, vegetables, grains, and other crops. Pioneering research at Sumner U. has shown that—contrary to a once-popular but now discredited belief—there is no clear link between smoking and cancers of the lung, throat, and other organs. Nor, as researchers have discovered, are there adverse effects from any of the commonly used drugs. Their colleagues have also shown scientifically that genetically engineered crops are beneficial both for human health and the natural environment. The same is also true of the new and improved pesticides and herbicides.

Clearly, the people of Marketopia have much to be thankful for. And so, not surprisingly, many Marketopians are religious. There are statues of and shrines to Saint Murray, Saint Milton, Saint Gary—and of course the female saints Ayn and Margaret—and other holy personages. The Austrian saints Ludwig and Friedrich are especially revered. Sacred scripture—found particularly in *The Book of Mammon*—is avidly studied, and many Marketopians can quote key scriptures from memory. "What profiteth a person who gaineth his soul but loseth his livelihood?" "It is easier for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." "Do unto others before they do unto you." "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, lest thou not get thy pizza." "The love of money is the root of all good" (this passage is also printed on the Rothbard). Especially beloved is the story of Saint Gary's Sermon in the Valley, in which he preached the gospel of self-love while selling day-old loaves and fish fingers. These and other scriptures constitute much of the moral instruction of the young and are a source of solace and comfort for the old.

Last, and certainly least, is politics and citizenship in Marketopia. With the Marketopian's minimal state comes minimal politics. Since most activities and services are privatized, there is little for government to do. Elected officials hurl taunts and insults at one another, and bemused Marketopians view what passes for politics as a form of entertainment closely akin to professional wrestling—which helps explain why professional wrestlers are often elected to public office. Some Marketopians vote for candidates they regard as having the greatest entertainment value. Most, however, sell their votes to the highest bidder in on-line election-year auctions. Of late, there has been much discus-

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sion about amending the Marketopian constitution because it does not, at present, allow voters to register the intensity of their preferences at the polls. A proposed amendment would remedy this defect by allowing voters to pay one Rothbard per vote for as many times as they care to vote.*

I LACK THE WIT to extend this parable any further. My point in introducing it is to raise three questions. First, why do some (or perhaps all) Marketopian practices make us uneasy or queasy, or worse? Second, what further distortions would the practices I've described introduce into our moral, political, and legal language and thus into our thinking and practices? Third, are we in important respects already living in Marketopia or at least heading in that direction?

By and large, markets are a good thing—a reasonably efficient means of discerning and satisfying people's preferences, of allocating goods and resources, and rewarding the more enterprising members of society. The prospect of making a profit is clearly a powerful motive for many people, and the genius of markets is to harness self-interest for purposes that bring general benefits. As Adam Smith famously put it, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages."

So, if markets are a good thing, why not let them work their magic in every sphere of social life? Why not buy and sell human organs, votes, and other things not traded in markets (or rather, in non-underground markets)? Why do we balk at extending the sway of the market into these and many other areas?

To these questions modern libertarians and economists of the Chicago School have a ready answer: only blind, unthinking, and irrational prejudice prevents us from making all (or at least most) human interactions into market transactions. As Gary Becker argues in *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*, we not only ought to think and act as self-interested agents, but we are already acting (if not yet thinking) in precisely those ways. We are each of us self-interested calculators of our own advantage, however much we might wish to hide that fact from others and even (or perhaps especially) from ourselves. Honesty and candor compel us to own up to that fact and drop the self-serving pretense that we sometimes act altruistically, and even against our own interests, in hopes of helping our fellow human beings. Even our ostensibly selfless actions are in actuality selfish: if we help others, that is only to help ourselves feel better. Thus there can be, by definition, no selfless acts. Or, if there are, they are, again by definition, irrational. (This is of course an oversimplification bordering on caricature. A good caricature, however, not only contains a grain of truth, but highlights significant features of the object or person it depicts.)

Perhaps it's only an ancient and widespread prejudice that argues against turning every good and activity into a marketable commodity. But as Edmund Burke and other conservatives remind us, ancient prejudices often have rational bases. We overturn certain prejudices at our peril. There are very good reasons for our prejudice against, say, auctioning off human organs to the highest bidder, or making police protection available only to those who can afford to pay for it, or turning executions into televised pay-per-view entertainment. These reasons have to do with our commitment to equality and fairness in the distribution of social goods.

The main shortcoming of Marketopia is its massive and systematic violation of a fundamental sense of fairness. Marketopians who cannot afford health care, education, police protection, and other of life's necessities are denied a fair (or even minimally sufficient) share of social goods. Indeed, they are destitute of every good, excluded from a just share

*When I first wrote this I meant it as a parody of a possible world that did not (yet) exist. But in the fall the *New York Times* reported on a now-defunct site—voteauction.com—where voters could sell their votes to the highest bidders. "The site. . .boasts that it is 'bringing capitalism and democracy closer together.' It offers to buy the absentee ballots of undecided voters and then allow organizations and individuals to bid for a block of votes from a state. . . . [V]ote prices have ranged from $10 to $20 each." (*New York Times*, October 20, 2000, p. A23.)

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of society's benefits and advantages, pushed to the margins, rendered invisible (as in my utopian sketch). They are excluded because they lack the resources to purchase goods and services that ought to be theirs by right. Marketopia is not only an unjust society but an *indecent* one. The argument against Marketopian libertarianism is as much about decency as it is about justice.

THE LIBERTARIAN turn toward free markets is marked by an attempt to alter radically the very vocabulary we use in describing and appraising human action. Heidegger once remarked with uncharacteristic clarity that we do not so much have a language as it has us. James Boyd White makes a similar point. "In important ways," he writes, "we become the language that we use," inasmuch as "the languages we speak, and the cultural practices they at once reflect and make possible, mark or form our minds by habituating them to certain forms of attention, certain ways of seeing and conceiving of oneself and of the world." Who or what do we become, once we begin to speak the language of libertarianism and of free-market economics? For, whatever its status as a science, the discipline of economics has a linguistic or rhetorical dimension. Economics supplies a *language of redescription*—a set of concepts and categories with which we recast the ways we describe and justify our institutions and practices. And in a capitalist-consumer culture like ours, this discourse appears to have a special authority. To speak and think in its idiom seems straightforward and admirably hard-headed.

By way of illustration, consider what Anthony Downs does in his now-classic contribution to rational-choice theory, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Political parties and candidates are redescribed as "entrepreneurs" competing with one another for the votes of "consumers," who will "spend" their votes (and bear the "costs" of voting) for the parties and candidates that they believe will best promote their interests. Such redescriptions are not normatively neutral inasmuch as they can supplant civic discourse, redirecting our attention and reshaping our characters and conduct. If we redescribe our political actions and institutions in Downs's idiom, we must forgo the older republican language of civic virtue, public service, duties and obligations. The two discourses are incompatible.

Another example, from my own social sphere: at two American universities with which I have been associated in recent years, the administration (and an increasing number of faculty) argues that the university should become more "entrepreneurial," that it should expand its "customer base" and therefore its "market share" in competition with other institutions. Faculty are "service providers," and students are "customers" for whose patronage departments and programs should compete. This is not merely a way of speaking but of thinking and acting. For example, those departments with the highest number of paying customers should, it is said, be rewarded accordingly, and those with lower enrollments punished, perhaps even by being eliminated altogether. (Under such schemes, needless to say, the business school fares far better than the classics department.) Deans and department chairs warn faculty members with reputations for being intellectually demanding to change their ways in order to attract more customers. Surveys are conducted to assess "customer satisfaction" with the "product" being delivered. And since the customers tend to be young, inexperienced, and desirous of being entertained while getting good grades, they gravitate toward courses that deliver the goods. The result, unsurprisingly, is not only grade inflation but a dumbing down of the curriculum and therefore, alas, of the "customers" themselves. To redescribe education in the language of the market is not to speak in a normatively neutral or innocent idiom. It has very real and problematic implications.

This is of course only a small part of a much larger trend toward the increasing marketization of moral, political, and pedagogical discourse. Our changing language may well presage a move toward Marketopia, which we ought to view with alarm. And by "we" I do not mean merely academics who fear being demoted from educators to "service providers." I mean that we as citizens have good grounds for fearing that the language of markets and consumership may be supplanting the language

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of citizenship and the capacity for critical thinking that it requires and promotes.

WE HAVE good grounds for acting while we still have the capacity. For whether our society will resemble Marketopia is a matter of choice, first, of the individual choices that we make as consumers and then, more decisively, of the collective choices that we make as citizens. What is to be the proper place of markets is not itself an economic question but a matter for political deliberation. Markets in their place may produce admirable results, but markets have limitations as well as virtues—a point persuasively argued by Robert Kuttner in *Everything For Sale* and Thomas Frank in *One Market, Under God*. Doubts about free-market ideology are spreading. Recent experiences in California, for example, call into question the wisdom of privatizing electrical power generation and distribution.

There is also a growing awareness in the United States and beyond of the downside of neoliberalism. Protests in Seattle and elsewhere against the World Trade Organization may prove to be an opening wedge in a long and no doubt difficult struggle against the encroachment of the market mentality into non-economic spheres. Revitalized labor unions and a growing Green movement are important allies in this struggle. But so are religious communities—Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant—which are becoming more vocally critical of consumerism, welfare cuts, and growing inequality. There may be alliances to be forged among these diverse groups. Politics can still make strange bedfellows.

In a capitalist-consumer society like ours, the discourse of competition and markets seems to be normal, natural, and unexceptionable. Yet, this discourse seeps into and influences our understanding of who we are and what we as a society are about. Indeed, this discourse is well-nigh pervasive in our culture. And it is precisely because market-thinking is so central to our capitalist-consumer culture that we should be all the more acutely aware of what it misses, marginalizes, trivializes, or undermines and destroys. As Michael Walzer writes in *Spheres of Justice*, "market relations are expansive. A radically *laissez-faire* economy would be like a totalitarian state, invading every other sphere, dominating every other distributive process. It would transform every social good into a commodity. This is market imperialism." Walzer goes on to argue that the market's imperialist tendencies can best be tamed and checked by an active and attentive democratic citizenry, wary of the inequalities and injustices—and indecencies—wrought by the free play of market forces.

Why does Marketopia strike most of us as a dystopia? Surely it is because in this context market relations become the totality of human relations. Where everything is for sale, nothing is sacred. Where value is equated with price, nothing is intrinsically valuable. Marketopians may be rich in material ways, but they live impoverished lives. ●

TERENCE BALL teaches political theory at Arizona State University. His books include *Transforming Political Discourse*, *Reappraising Political Theory*, and a mystery novel, *Rousseau's Ghost*.

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The Political Potential of the Web

Noam Cohen

As a loyal, if discontented, *Dissent* reader, I was only mildly surprised that you would print a pair of articles that are sullen and cautionary about a recent technological and cultural phenomenon called the Internet ("The Information Society, the New Economy, and the Hype," by James B. Rule, Fall 2000 and "Highway to Nowhere," by Gina Neff, Winter 2001). I suppose *Dissent* would find reasons why manna from heaven would promote the current power structure, but joking aside, these articles' dyspeptic attitude toward the World Wide Web and all it contains and all it promises should be particularly disturbing to all of us. It means that talented people on the left haven't even dipped their toes in the currents of cyberspace to consider how to use this unprecedented opportunity to heal the crazy, unjust world we live in. And if something like the Internet—which has conjured up a host of billion-dollar-valued companies in less than a decade, threatens to reconceive entire industries (such as recorded music, publishing, news gathering, and retail sales), and offers a heretofore unimagined model of community building—can't generate enthusiasm among a group of social critics, it's hard to imagine what will.

There are reasons why the Internet has been pushed aside by people on the left—so much of the discussion about the World Wide Web is linked to commerce and stock price, venture capitalists and day-traders. But these characteristics, which surely are less relevant after the crash of Internet stocks last year, should not excuse the blithe ignorance of most *Dissent* editors and the outright hostility of its writers.

In fact, the Internet embodies much of the internationalist thinking that once used to characterize the left, all that "workers of the world, unite" stuff I read about in college. Yes, in the short term, the Internet has made it easier for companies to hire cheap labor around the world. But it has also made it easier for oppression to come to the world's attention. Eventually, the Internet should make it easier for unions to organize internationally, as Marx and others imagined. (In fact, progressive-minded unions, such as the Communications Workers of America, to which I used to belong, already have extensive ties to European counterparts.) And we on the left should celebrate the world's coming together. Sure, I, like nearly all *Dissent* readers, opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement because of the lower salaries and degraded working conditions it meant for American workers—the ones to whom I obviously owe the greatest allegiance—but I also recognize that some day we will have worldwide standards for workers and that I really should care about the Mexican workers whose base salaries and working conditions are invariably lifted by free-trade agreements like NAFTA. Instead of decrying the capitalistic tilt of the Internet and globalism in general, shouldn't we be encouraging the globalization of labor?

On other matters of social justice, the Internet also has great potential. In Yugoslavia, China, and the Middle East, the freedom of the Internet has worked against the iron-fisted control that allows oppression to continue. In my few forays into turn-of-the-century socialist thinkers, I have read how committed people of the left quixotically tried to rally around Esperanto (a so-called universal language that, reflecting the times, seemed a lot like a hybrid European language) to further social justice and end hatred around the globe. Yet, thanks to the Internet, we actually have such a language (English) and the means of universal communication that dreamers like

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Antonio Gramsci could never have fathomed. But the left passes over all the improvements such a common tongue could bring.

Furthermore, as fate would have it, the biggest proponents of the Internet (a group hereafter affectionately referred to as "geeks") happen to have an anticapitalist attitude toward property—a true communitarian spirit that was responsible for the creation of the Internet itself. And the geeks have fought hard against corporate attempts to rein in that spirit. Perhaps because of their outcast status in society, they have tended to minimize the importance of "owning" the programs they have created for the sake of improving everyone's interaction with the Internet.

As a result, there is a growing following for the "open-source" movement, the particular scourge of software giant Microsoft. While Microsoft has leveraged its creations—some would say extorting the public in the process—the credo of open-source programmers allows people to freely use their work provided that they promise, in turn, not to charge others for it, and they agree to share whatever improvements they come up with. This ethic is obviously toxic to capitalism, but I'd say it is still the prevailing one on the Internet. It helps explain why the Web has resisted easy profits—not business-to-business companies, not peer-to-peer companies, or any other combination touted by investors. In fact, in the last few months, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and Disney, among others, have fled the Internet after losing millions of dollars. It's responsible for the "information wants to be free" mantra that has undercut my own employer—Inside.com, an entertainment and media news site. For more than a year, the most compelling phenomenon on the Net has been Napster— with more than forty million users worldwide—which allows for unlimited swapping of all kinds of music (through MP3 files).

So compelling is the argument that you can't charge for material "located" on the Internet—words, music, video, you name it—that businesses have had to look to other techniques, whether generating demographically useful E-mail lists or selling off-line products. (After losing a lawsuit against the major record labels, Napster—ever the business optimist—entered into a partnership with the parent of one of them, Bertelsmann, and plans to limit the service to paid subscribers.)

To recap, this thing called the Internet has the power to establish a sisterhood and brotherhood of the world, it is built on principles of sharing and common purpose, and it stubbornly resists the efforts of capital to yield profits. Yet we are told by *Dissent* that it is a neutral development, at best, that has already been horribly co-opted.

Bringing this argument closer to home, I can cite some practical examples of the ways that the Internet has already been used to destabilize the status quo and encourage the causes of democracy and political action.

Access to Information

The Internet ties together like-minded thinkers. A search for "John Ashcroft," for example, on Google, a popular Web search engine, leads to a box for an anti-Ashcroft site that provides facts and contact information. Yes, the connection is facilitated by money—although the advertising fees are surprisingly cheap—but suddenly people can be quickly joined together and assisted in protest. There are a host of other examples of how the Web aids collective action, including the work of the Direct Action Network (www.directactionnetwork.org), which helped organize the Seattle World Trade Organization protests.

Likewise, sites like Matt Drudge's *Drudge Report*, *Slashdot.org*, and *Plastic.com* challenge accepted notions that there should be these people called "editors"—employed, it so happens, by huge, typically multinational, corporations—who are supposed to decide what news is, and then there are others—readers—who lap it up. Whether you like him or hate him for his right-wing slant, Drudge opens up the channels of newsgathering. (If a piece is killed for corporatist reasons, a reporter thankfully has another outlet.) *Slashdot* and *Plastic* (with which *Inside* has a relationship) encourage readers to say that a certain text, a certain article, a certain song, is "big news." The content consists of submitted links plus the reader comments on these submissions. Granted,

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there are gatekeepers acting like editors, but with a much lighter touch, with everything generated by contributors. When Gina Neff says that news sites aren't particularly popular with users—a claim I'm not sure is true—I hope you recognize that there are nontraditional sites that have a power and potential to shake *CBS.com* or *CNN.com* to their very roots.

I think, also, of a Napster-fueled episode about a year ago—the spread of Bruce Springsteen's "41 Shots: American Skin" about the police killing of unarmed African immigrant Amadou Diallo. The haunting and beautiful song came to public light when Springsteen, a champion of the worker, unveiled it at a series of concerts at Madison Square Garden, drawing the wrath of the Policemen's Benevolent Association, normally a solid fan base of his. The song had not been released commercially, he had just written it, yet bootleg copies from the concert were soon burning up Napster. A protest anthem went from the writer's pen to hundreds of thousands in a matter of days.

Napster is a broadening experience in another way, in that only a single copy of a song (say something long out of print) is required for it to proliferate to all who would want to hear it. Record executives, like news editors, no longer have exclusive control over what's in the public consciousness and what isn't. This power of digitization and the Internet to make all music and all books available to people anywhere in the world can easily be overlooked when all one reads are churlish accounts like Harold Bloom's in the *New York Times* that fetishize "The Book" and imply that reading literature in any other format is somehow less than worthwhile.

Challenge to Materialism

If the open-source geeks, the alternative on-line news outlets, and the Napster file-sharers win out, they will obliterate the century-old structure organized around cultural packagers, those select few who are responsible for setting public tastes. Who says that music has to be so expensive? Who says that the range of human knowledge should be reserved for elite universities? Who says a handful of people should decide what news is? Who says that people should watch or listen to what has been demographically chosen for them? Who says that culture is fundamentally about marketing, rather than about the shared experience of creative works?

The good thing is that these questions have already fueled a strong opposition movement—whether through relatively new organizations like the Electronic Freedom Forum or more established ones like the American Civil Liberties Union. And the idea of Napster and a related program, DeCSS (software that breaks down protections on DVDs that could allow them to be swapped as well), has already motivated a sleepy, contented on-line population. The opportunities for the left have never appeared greater, but that means learning about the new technological revolution, not mindlessly blocking it out. ●

NOAM COHEN is executive editor for news at *Inside.com*.

Gina Neff Replies

NOAM COHEN makes several very good points about the possibilities of social change occurring from the technological revolution of the Internet. Before we on the left embrace the Internet as a cure-all for the woes of modern consumerism and alienation, I think we need to reconsider the connection between technological change and social relations. Media are as much social phenomena as technological ones. Just because sweeping technological changes have occurred, social ones—despite the predictions of Cohen and many others—will not necessarily follow. Take media concentration, for example. Cohen has a point about the "freedom" that the Internet promises from pesky editors and global media conglomerates. But the facts remain: media are concentrated in a few corporate hands, despite the bluster of Internet boosters about "disintermediation." The "we'll print anything"

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sites do not necessarily constitute a more political form of communication, nor do they challenge the power of mainstream media. Power comes from the kind of integrity built upon a reputation for truth-telling, and just because something is in print or on-line does not mean people will be inspired to take action. *Plastic*, the *Drudge Report* and the various chain E-mails all suffer from this huge political downside of disintermediation and, ultimately, are no more effective than an individual yelling on a street corner. Take a look at well-meaning—but wrong—chain E-mails to "save NPR," or oppose the Taliban. Both of the servers to which recipients are urged to reply have long been shut down. Messages urging people to stop "Bill 602P" which would "tax E-mail" are part of a hoax. The scheme to "click here to send a poor person food" or "donate a mammogram today" was set up by a for-profit company that was recently dropped as a donor by the United Nations Development Program because of its deceptive advertising and dubious finances. There has been some genuine facilitation of activism, but these resemble older forms of turning people out to real demonstrations or asking people to write real letters. Cohen points to the Direct Action Nework as being very good at on-line organizing, but many groups that use the Internet were also very good at contributing to the organization of major demonstrations through old-fashioned postering and bus logistics before their use of the Web and E-mail. The power of the left is still through organizing, and although there are ways that on-line communication can facilitate that, political power isn't virtual.

As for the excitement about information yearning to be free, we on the left need to remember that *people* actually do the work of creating information. Napster, the popular music "sharing" service, isn't the same as a public library where I can borrow CDs for free; it is more akin to an international bootlegging operation. Sure, musicians should get more money and not have to deal with nasty major record labels, and (as any serious collector of Bob Dylan bootlegs already knows) there will always be a place for unauthorized duplication. But this is not, as Cohen puts it, "a challenge to materialism." If anything, Napster is encouraging a kind of hyper-consumption akin to looting during a riot, and the same is happening with the wholesale giveaway of writing on-line. As John R. MacArthur, a publisher of one of those old-economy magazines, *Harper's*, has argued, publishers' and authors' livelihoods won't be improved by the Internet's being "not much more than a bigger, faster Xerox machine with a telephone jack."

Napster and other forms of information sharing raise tough questions about how to pay for intellectual content. I'm a writer, and until my landlord takes my prose in lieu of cash, I still have to pay the rent. Cohen's employer may be failing miserably at its attempt to get people to fork over two hundred dollars a year for on-line subscriptions, but people still work there, and somehow they need to get paid. Erasing the work involved in the production of music or writing or any other form of on-line content isn't a political strategy the left should pursue.

Rather than embrace the mainstream hype about a new economic revolution, we need to continue to fight for real solutions and question the false promise of virtual quick fixes to political and social problems. ●

GINA NEFF is a New York-based writer.

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Unnecessary Gloom

The Class v. Culture Clash

Ruy Teixeira

ALTHOUGH Thomas Byrne Edsall's review of my and Joel Rogers's *America's Forgotten Majority* is both thoughtful and perceptive ("Why Class Doesn't Trump Culture," *Dissent*, Spring 2001), some of his points aren't quite fair to the book. Further, I disagree with his claim that the 2000 election constitutes a convincing test case of one of the book's key messages. Edsall is very much on track, however, in terms of the importance of cultural factors, even if he may be unnecessarily gloomy about the limits these factors impose on progressives.

First, the book doesn't say that the voting decisions of less well educated white Americans are "determined by gains or losses in median wages and family income." Rather, it argues that economic trends, *as seen through the prism of their deeply held values*, have had a central role in shaping these voters' attitudes toward politics and the role of government. This obviously doesn't say that values are unimportant and it doesn't even say that so-called "values issues," such as abortion or homosexuality, are unimportant. Indeed, the book in no way purports to be a "theory of everything" in accounting for the political behavior of forgotten-majority—or any other—voters. It simply insists that the economics-values interaction is crucial to understanding this group's political behavior, a claim that seems reasonable to me.

Second, the book emphasizes the changes in the white working class. Edsall is absolutely right to point out that white non-college-educated men are "exceptionally diverse" and that "[n]on-college-educated workers are far less blue-collar than in the past; far more involved in technology, services and in types of work falling outside the boundaries of traditional class analysis." *America's Forgotten Majority* goes into considerable detail about just these kinds of changes. The broad point of the book, however, was to highlight the political centrality of this group of voters—a point Edsall agrees with—and the economic challenges that members of this group still face, new economy or not.

Edsall faults our account of recent economic developments for not considering that "[t]he benefits of rising productivity and growth do, in fact, finally appear to be moving down the educational ladder." On the contrary, both in chapter two and the concluding chapter, the improved economic performance of the late 1990s is highlighted precisely because it did represent a return to broadly shared wage and income growth, even if that improved performance did not—and could not—make up ground lost over several decades (indeed, it took quite a while simply to make up ground lost in the earlier part of the 1990s). The book emphasizes that a return to steady wage and income growth has been an important factor in softening "forgotten majority" attitudes toward government and generating some openness toward the active use of public resources.

My primary disagreement is with Edsall's argument that Al Gore's "populist" campaign provided a reasonable test of the book's claim that forgotten-majority voters could be mobilized by Democrats committed to attacking the problems these voters face in the new economy. Well, perhaps of the claim that this could be done easily—but that wasn't really what the book said. The argument was rather that the Democrats' best shot at reaching these voters—and reversing their crippling deficit among them—is to convince them that the Democrats have a reasonable, effective, and forward-looking plan for promoting their welfare in new economic circumstances.

Whatever else Gore's populism may have

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been (and in many ways it was quite popular), I think it's fair to say that it didn't constitute this forward-looking approach. Consider education, the single issue most cited by voters during the campaign as their chief concern and perhaps the quintessential "new economy" issue. Despite the fact that voters have tended to favor Democrats on this issue by large margins in the 1990s, the Democrats netted only a modest 52 percent to 44 percent advantage on the issue in the Voter News Service exit poll. Education was also the economic issue (beside taxes) on which voters most consistently failed to give Gore's approach much, or any, preference over that of George W. Bush. This suggests that defending and extending social insurance—that is, Social Security and Medicare—the Democrats' chief emphasis in the 2000 campaign, may not be the way to go in the future. Although defending social insurance should clearly remain a bedrock commitment by the party, it is difficult to argue that it constitutes a convincing approach to the unfolding problems of the new economy. For many forgotten-majority voters, the Democratic approach may have failed to excite for precisely this reason. Convincing these voters that Democrats really have a vision for the future and their families will require a fresher approach that focuses on such critical areas as education, training, child care, work-family stress, scientific research and, of course, health and pension coverage.

Lacking such a vision and program, the Democrats will have difficulty getting beyond trench warfare with the Republicans. It's simply too easy for the Republicans to astutely blur differences with the Democrats on a limited set of complex programmatic issues. The 2000 campaign provides ample evidence of this, as Bush positioned himself close to Gore on issues where voters, including forgotten-majority voters, actually tended to favor the Democrats' approach—thereby bringing other sentiments to the fore.

WHAT OTHER sentiments? That's exactly where the kinds of factors emphasized by Edsall come into play. Polling data from the campaign and election strongly suggest that the Gore campaign was severely hurt by problems of trust, of cultural conservatism, and of generic antigovernment sentiment. In a post-election poll conducted by Stanley Greenberg for the Institute for America's Future, these were the most frequently cited doubts about voting for Gore. Problems of trust—for example "[Gore's] exaggerations and untruthfulness"—were strong among all white voters, a difficulty with roots in the Clinton administration's problems, but presumably exacerbated by the flaws in Gore's campaign style. Problems reflecting generic antigovernment sentiment—"[Gore's] support for Federal big government solutions" and the like—were weaker among non-college-educated white voters, even the men among them, and stronger among the affluent and well educated. In contrast, and significantly for this discussion, problems based on cultural conservatism—chiefly gay marriage, abortion rights, and gun control—were notably stronger among non-college-educated whites and among those with incomes under $75,000 per year.

In a situation where there was such confusion among voters about the issue differences between the candidates, and little else to inspire them, it was inevitable that many would choose the candidate they felt more comfortable with in these other areas. This was a dynamic that intrinsically favored Bush, as his advisers well knew, especially among the forgotten-majority voters we are discussing here. The result, as detailed in the sources previously cited, was the swing toward Bush among these voters that gave him the election (or close enough for a decisive Supreme Court assist). It was also an election in which, as Edsall reminds us, class patterns in voting were frequently difficult to detect and sometimes went in unexpected directions (a pro-Gore tilt among women in the upper middle class, for example).

But what should we conclude from this? Edsall's view seems to be that class has become irrelevant and economic-related issues that interact strongly with class have lost their ability to disproportionately attract working- and middle-class voters, including, of course, members of the forgotten majority. If true, this would certainly put a damper on both Democratic prospects and any possibilities of a progressive revival.

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I think Edsall is unnecessarily gloomy. Start with the observation that some significant part of this cultural drag on the Democrats is probably episodic. As the memory of the Clinton scandals fades, it should be much easier for the Democrats to present an appealing face to disaffected forgotten-majority voters, especially if they can avoid running campaigns that reinforce and exacerbate cultural distrust. Then, consider the fact that the country continues to change in ways that fundamentally favor social tolerance, new roles for women, protection of the environment, and an entire cultural ethos stemming from the movements of the 1960s and bound up with the emergence of the new economy. The Democrats, as younger voters replace older and as the new economy transforms more and more areas of the country, tend to benefit, on net, from these changes, even though it is possible in an election like 2000 for an unfortunate conjuncture of circumstances to temporarily derail them. After all, what is the future of the country—West Virginia, where the Republicans rode cultural distrust to an unexpected victory, or California, where the Democrats now have a statewide lock on the government?

All this suggests that the Democrats and progressives need not fear identification with this cultural ethos; indeed, they should welcome it. And they certainly should not fear that existing cultural conservatism makes a strong program on economic issues moot. As the Clinton administration becomes a more distant memory and as the country continues its economic and social transformation, that conservatism will be less and less decisive to voters', including forgotten-majority voters', decisions. This should allow the Democrats—given a forward-looking program for the new economy and more deft campaigns that do not needlessly generate cultural antagonism—to develop the support levels they need among working- and middle-class, particularly forgotten-majority, voters. In fact, there's a good case to be made that, given the right kind of appeals, an emerging Democratic majority should dominate the early part of the twenty-first century.

Of course, as Edsall points out "crafting such appeals will not be easy." I couldn't agree more. I welcome his and others' suggestions for the most fruitful ways to approach this task. The real strength of *America's Forgotten Majority*, after all—and perhaps Edsall would agree—was just to ask the right questions. Getting the right answers will require all of our efforts. ●

RUY TEIXEIRA is a senior fellow at the Century Foundation. His new book, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, with John Judis, will come out in fall 2002.

Thomas Byrne Edsall Replies

RUY TEIXEIRA and I are in substantial agreement on many of the forces at work in contemporary politics—particularly on the central role of white, working-class voters in recent elections and the necessity of having an effective plan for promoting economic growth and more equitable distribution in new competitive circumstances to win their votes. We differ, however, on a number of specifics, and those specifics have major consequences. Teixeira quite correctly, writes from the point of view of someone who wants to shape a certain kind of coalition and to have the parties polarize in ways that fit his vision of what the Democratic Party ought to be. My own approach is less concerned with what ought to be than with what is likely. Teixeira and other allies may well be able to push politics in a different direction, but I think that their task will be difficult.

Most important, politicians and political strategists generally respond to market pressures. In the case of the Democrats, the pressures are to continue to go after upscale, well-educated voters and not to go after white, working-class voters. Most of the growth in Democratic support has been among well-educated, white professionals who are liberal on social issues (abortion, school prayer, the culture wars generally). In the 2000 election, Al Gore won

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a majority in seventeen of the twenty-five most affluent counties in the nation. In the same election, Bush won in some of the poorest, predominantly white counties in the country. These trends are well documented in *Social Cleavages and Political Change*, by Jeff Manza and Clem Brooks.

Relatively well-to-do and very well educated voters (many with more than a college degree) are increasingly drawn to the Democratic Party and have been crucial to the party's success in California, New York, and on both coasts—as well as in the suburbs of such cities as Chicago and Detroit. Politicians and parties tend to go where the votes are, and in recent years, the Democrats have found their new voters not in the white working class, but among the educated. White, working-class voters, as Stan Greenberg's polling shows, hold less than welcoming attitudes toward the Democratic Party, and among non-college-educated whites, hostile attitudes outweigh positive ones. This climate does not create much incentive for a Democratic politician seeking to build a majority in the relatively short time frame of a campaign.

Teixeira argues that "Democrats and progressives need not fear identification with this [socially liberal] cultural ethos; indeed, they should welcome it. And they certainly should not fear that existing cultural conservatism makes a strong program on economic issues moot. As the Clinton administration becomes a more distant memory and as the country continues its economic and social transformation, that conservatism will be less and less decisive to voters', including forgotten-majority voters', decisions. This should allow the Democrats, given a forward-looking program for the new economy and defter campaigns that do not needlessly generate cultural antagonism, to develop the support levels they need among working- and middle-class, particularly forgotten-majority, voters. In fact, there's a good case to be made that, given the right kind of appeals, an emerging Democratic majority should dominate the early part of the twenty-first century."

He is correct in observing trends that suggest favorable demographic circumstances for Democrats. Rural areas (increasingly Republican) are declining and urban areas (increasingly Democratic) are growing. Hispanics are coming of political age and they tend to vote Democratic by roughly two to one. By the end of this decade, if nothing were to happen to change partisan voting patterns, the growth of the Hispanic vote could well return Texas, Arizona, Florida, and New Mexico to the Democratic column.

But the reality is that both parties adjust to new demographics, and Republicans are working furiously to adapt to the shifting ethnic composition of the American electorate. The GOP will change or it will die, and survival instinct is generally stronger than ideology in America. Although the future Hispanic vote remains unknown, Republicans contend that unlike African-Americans, whose loyalty to the Democratic Party remains strong at all income levels, the contemporary Hispanic commitment to the Democratic Party is based more on class than on ethnic or racial commitment, and that middle-class Hispanics tend to vote much more Republican than poor Hispanics. If that is true, and if Hispanics do well over time, Democrats will eventually get a smaller rather than a larger share of the Hispanic vote.

FINALLY, ONE trend that has not been adequately explored is the growth in the percentage of Americans who own stock. According to Federal Reserve data published on the Statistical Abstract of the United States Web site, after remaining relatively flat from 1935 (21 percent) to 1983 (19 percent), the percentage of Americans owning stock has steadily grown to 32 percent in 1989, 37 percent in 1992, 40 percent in 1995, and 43 percent in 1999. This growth is based in part on the rise of 401(k) retirement plans and expanded participation in mutual funds. Also significant is indirect stock ownership via such huge pension and retirement funds as CALPERS (California Public Employee Retirement System), the Teamsters pension fund, and the National Industrial Group Pension Plan (UAW). In addition, the financial security of millions of working-class Americans who do not see themselves as, or identify with, investors is increasingly dependent on the suc-

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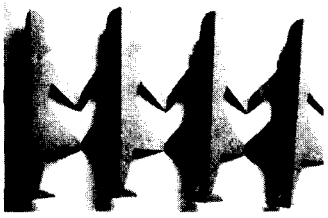
cess of their corporate employers. Politically, such developments suggest the likelihood of a long-term shift in public attitudes toward the business sector—with consequences for progressive and populist Democratic strategies. In this context, perhaps the three most significant factors to watch in the coming years are the political influence of indirect and direct stock ownership, the partisan alignment of Hispanics, and the social liberalism of professional elites. As Teixeira and Rogers accurately argue, not only does the white working class remain a crucial element in American politics, but political appeals to all these groups are likely to require new tactical thinking. ●

THOMAS BYRNE EDSALL is a national political reporter for the *Washington Post*. He is the author of *The New Politics of Inequality* and *Chain Reaction*.



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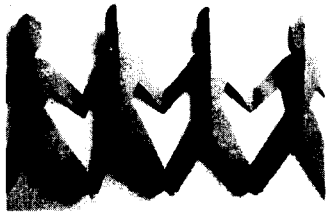

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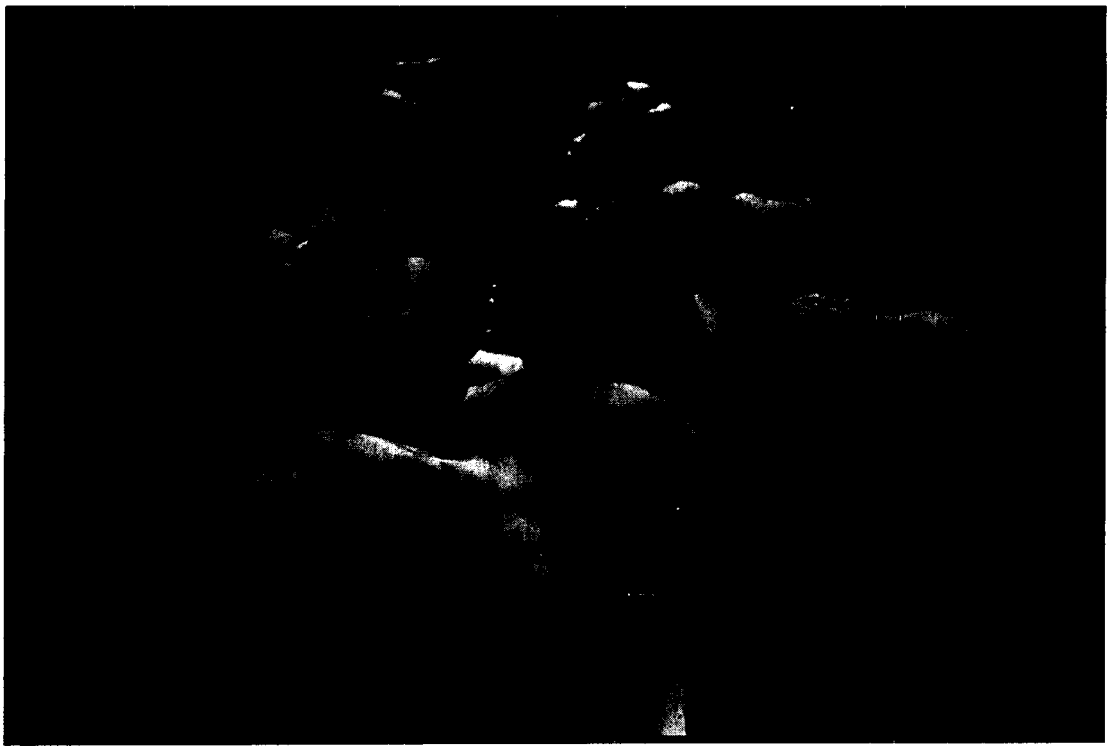

Middle Passage depicts some of the conditions slaves experienced while being transported from Africa to the western hemisphere. Using local teenagers as models, sculptors Kim Crowley, Donald Calloway, and LaVern Homan sculpted forty figures. Photo by Felecia Hunt-Taylor. Courtesy Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.

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Images of Black History

The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

Dora Apel

The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History (MAAH), which opened in Detroit in April 1997, has been acclaimed as the nation's most important black history museum in numerous descriptive accounts, but, with a few notable exceptions, has not received much critical attention. This is due, perhaps, to the very nature of the subject: Americans have been largely unable or ambivalent about coming to terms with the history of American slavery and its legacy, as evidenced by the debate, from 1984 to 1994, over an African-American museum on the Mall in Washington, D.C.; the 1997 debate over Representative Tony Hall's (D-Ohio) proposal to the House that a resolution of apology to African-Americans be made for the past trauma of slavery; and the recent vote by the state of Mississippi to retain the Confederate symbol as part of its flag. Thus, anyone criticizing an institution dedicated to "the celebration of African American achievement" needs to tread carefully. Still, it is necessary to examine the key assumptions underlying the exhibition and to ask, What are the ideological premises guiding the historical narrative? Where, in particular, does this narrative lead? Has critical inquiry been sacrificed in the interest of celebration?

The $38.4 million structure was funded by taxpayer dollars as well as by individual and corporate donations. Designed by the African-American firm Sims-Varner Architects of Detroit, it houses two galleries for temporary exhibitions, a rotunda and 100-foot dome patterned after an African hut, a 317-seat theater, classrooms, a research library, a museum store, and a café. The museum's main and permanent exhibition, titled "Of the People: The African American Experience," covers sixteen thousand square feet and illustrates subjects from fourteenth-century African history to contemporary black culture in the United States. In its first three weeks of operation, it attracted a hundred thousand visitors to see such artifacts as the rusted shackles used to hold slaves on a plantation in Virginia; the flight suit worn in 1987 by Mae Jemison, the nation's first black female astronaut; a reproduction of the door to the jail cell in Birmingham, Alabama, where Martin Luther King, Jr., was held; a case full of inventions by African-Americans, such as the stoplight and the gas mask; and—the central exhibit—a seventy-foot model slave ship inscribed with the names of more than two thousand slave ships that made the journey known as the Middle Passage from West Africa to the New World over a period of four hundred years.

Designed by Ralph Appelbaum, the exhibition is meant to provide African-Americans with a history that goes beyond the brutal victimization of slavery and that can generate a sense of positive identity and collective achievement. The section of the exhibition that represents the slave trade and slavery in the United States, as Charles Pete Banner-Haley points out, follows the outlines of what has now become mainstream black history. It does not, however, include more recent scholarship. Referring to this conventional rendition as the "Roots Response," Banner-Haley notes, in particular, the lack of any effort to represent "gender roles and relations and slave family life."[1]

More important, the very idea of race as a social construction, which has been the subject of much recent research and scholarship, is unexamined. Postmodern scholarship has recognized race as a discursive construction and essentialism as itself an ideology. So "blackness" can only be understood as constructed in binary opposition to "whiteness." Each cat-

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egory must be analyzed in terms of the other. Identity is not fixed or predetermined; it develops over time. As the nation-state evolved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, its ideologists aimed at, in the words of Jon Stratton, "the establishment of a single, homogenous national culture that was the expression of a single, national people. The discourse of race was the most important method by which the homogeneous population was produced. Some groups of people were identified as of the same race and could, therefore, be assimilated; others were identified as of different races and were to be excluded."[2] Thus, race in America was founded on a core myth of the American nation as composed of only white men and women. "In this myth," writes anthropologist Karen Brodkin, "the alternatives available to nonwhite and variously alien 'others' has been either to whiten themselves or to be consigned to an animal-like ungendered underclass unfit to exercise the prerogatives of citizenship."[3] While the MAAH attempts to alter the established view of a "white" America, it misses the opportunity to examine the issues surrounding the concept of "race" and racism. As Christopher Clarke-Hazlett notes, the links between slavery and racism are themselves taken for granted and never clearly established or explored.[4]

The permanent exhibition opens with videos on three panels that promise to remember a black history of accomplishment and victorious struggle over oppression. The narrator (Ossie Davis) states categorically, "Africa is our common heritage, America is our home," establishing the central theme of the exhibition: an Afrocentric sense of American identity. This has important implications for the rest of the narrative, which is told in the first person, constructing the viewer as "black." The discourse of "struggle" is replaced throughout with that of "empowerment," and the history of persecution is carefully balanced with one of pride, optimism, and creativity. Following the introductory video, visitors cross a steel bridge above the model slave ship, which contains forty life-size figures of slaves cast from Detroit students. Viewers stand in a superior position above these figures. Because viewers are constructed as black, this physically and psychologically places them in a position of having transcended their own history (and, at the same time, in the privileged position of the slavers). The emotional experience evoked by entering the proximate space of oppression—for example, the cattle car at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. (also designed by Ralph Appelbaum)—is transformed into something more comfortable, while a voice overhead informs the visitor about the twenty million Africans captured for the slave trade, the loss of about a third of these during the voyage, and the forms of resistance, including hunger strikes and mutinies.

THE EXHIBITION is organized around eight "historical stations." The first half of the exhibition focuses on history about Africa and the African slave trade. At one point, the exhibition intimates that slavery was a holocaust. "Holocaust" has gained wide currency among Afrocentrists, as American blacks and Jews have become embroiled in dismaying accusations of black anti-Semitism and of Jewish racism and ignorance about the suffering caused by slavery. At first glance the museum might seem to be acting against this alienated relationship by displaying a table-sized model of the slave ship *Sunny South* with a label that reads, "The model was made by Dr. Robert Bland, of Detroit, with wood from a mahogany chest that had been passed on by generations of his family for over 100 years. Mr. and Mrs. Michael Bennett, sailmakers of Jewish descent, contributed sail canvas, as old as the wood, that had been kept over the years in their own family. The model, made from heirlooms of two families, each with the memory of a holocaust of its people, exemplifies the possibilities of healing." The comparison to Nazi genocide does not stand up to closer scrutiny. Slave owners, with all their brutality, were driven by economic reasons to keep slaves *alive* for their labor power; the Judeocide meant to eradicate all Jews as a people and was not driven by economic motives.

Nor are the "healing possibilities" of the text spelled out. We assume that the fact of collaboration is the basis for this hopeful assessment, in which case we might expect the far more politically potent collaboration of

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blacks and Jews during the civil rights movement to be mentioned, but it never is. The history of the civil rights movement itself is generalized (film clips of civil rights leaders lack specific historical context, providing no dates or places), and the one photograph that directly alludes to interracial collaboration is placed high on a vertical shelf. This four-by-six-inch photograph of men in a field has a caption explaining that three civil rights workers—James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner—were murdered by racist whites in Mississippi, but not that two of them, Goodman and Schwerner, were Jewish (or "white"). The museum, in its reference to the "two holocausts" implicitly relegates the Jewish genocide to the sphere of "white" history and reifies the binary opposition. But both American slavery and the Jewish genocide must be understood in historical terms for their impact on the subsequent development of American and European civilization, not simply as "black" or "Jewish" histories.

The second half of the exhibition is also troublesome, particularly in its treatment of the civil rights and post–civil rights era. Here the narrative attempts to incorporate and homogenize into a single mainstream the internal conflicts of the civil rights movement and the Black Power era, without coming to terms with their sometimes polarizing politics. Clarke-Hazlett describes the dilemma of "how to affirm the value and the struggles of past generations of African Americans without sacrificing the complexity of lived history and without ignoring or obscuring the deep, sometimes bitter conflicts that arose among black people who were otherwise united in resistance to racism and oppression." Film clips of civil rights leaders making speeches show footage of Malcolm X only in connection with his funeral, telling us nothing about this most provocative and eloquent champion of black separatism. In the object cases containing unpublished pages of his writing, the narrative alludes to Malcolm X's "changed views" after a visit to Mecca, but fails to spell out the nature and implications of this "change"—a move away from the black nationalism of the Nation of Islam and toward a recognition of the possibility of political struggle in concert with whites. SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), and the Black Panther Party are referred to in the long text panels lining the wall in terms of their more apolitical activities, such as organizing breakfasts for poor children. Thus the narrative effectively effaces the radical black struggles of the sixties and seventies, part of a larger strategy that avoids contentious politics. The museum presents a separate (but not too radical) black history. But, as Fath Davis Ruffins asks:

> Is the story of Black separation, isolation, and achievement against the odds the primary narrative of meaning? In most African-American museums, some version of this narrative is absolutely central; it fulfills African Americans' need for a validating and distinctive history. However, for other Americans troubled by the history of segregation, the great narrative of African-American life has much more to do with integration into and acceptance by the mainstream of American life.[5]

Afrocentrism represents a kind of backlash against this latter view. Its proponents question "the value of integration as a goal" and find space in the new separatism that has arisen among middle-class black nationalists. The MAAH, by emphasizing the separateness, isolation, and individual creativity of American blacks, while effacing the relationship to "white" society, draws on this ideological perspective.

In the glass cases and on the video monitors, the emphasis is on heroes, role models, and their achievements. The video screens run continuous loops of famous African-Americans with short statements about their accomplishments. There's Charlie Parker, the great jazz saxophonist; "Sidney Poitier," we are told, "won an Oscar for *Lilies of the Field*." There's Angela Davis, and this is *her* contribution: "Activist Angela Davis was arrested by the FBI and acquitted of all charges." What sort of activist was she? Arrested on what charges? Is this mysterious acquittal her primary achievement? We are never told that she is a writer, or was a leading member of the American Communist Party. Nor is Paul Robeson's well-known CP membership mentioned in the text beside an

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advertisement for his album *Ballad for Americans*. Instead, the text notes: "Internationally renowned as an actor and singer, Robeson was also notable for his repudiation of Nazism, his support of the struggle for civil rights in the United States, and his interest in the Soviet Union. During the Cold War era, when he was banned from concert halls because of his views, he was welcomed and supported in some Detroit neighborhoods." His interest in the Soviet Union is thus only indirectly and vaguely connected to his being "banned from concert halls" and being welcome in only *certain* Detroit neighborhoods. History is obfuscated.

Four graphic photographs of lynchings, about four by six inches each, are placed flat on small shelves nearly five feet above the floor to avoid exposing young children to these sights. Inexplicably, an eight-by-ten lynching photograph is easily visible in a low glass case. Other images are set vertically into panels above glass cases, at an eye level about five and a half feet from the floor. These include images of the empty hulk of a bombed bus and segregated classrooms. The semi-inaccessible placement of some of these images raises questions about this strategy. The photograph of FBI agents wandering in a field where Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney were believed to be murdered has already been mentioned. Another color photograph showing a building in the South Bronx with rubble strewn in front of it is captioned, "Abandoned lot in front of public housing in the South Bronx, New York, 1981." Is it really necessary to shield the young from the image of urban blight? Is the mere sight of the disintegrating state of poor and working-class black housing too disturbing for young black museum-goers to see? The museum courts an audience that is middle class and suburban; otherwise its members would certainly already have seen the dilapidated public housing that has existed for years in the city of Detroit.

The final panels of the exhibition begin with the phrase, "Becoming the Future Means:" and are followed by such prescriptions as, "exerting power as consumers . . . being in business, small, medium, or large, corner stores or multimillion-dollar corporations . . . investing in stocks and bonds, in money markets and mutual funds . . . welcoming immigrants . . . from the South, Canada, the Caribbean and Africa . . . putting more African nutrition in our diets and African flavors in our recipes . . . learning African languages and dialects . . . traveling to Africa." Given this emphasis on black entrepreneurial enterprise and black separateness, the memory of integrated struggles for racial equality or the significance of race and hybridity as socially constructed categories clearly don't fit in. The narrative culminates in the promotion of petty-bourgeois individual achievement based on a sense of black pride that links American blacks to an African "motherland," despite the fact that many blacks, who have been Americans for generations, feel little or no cultural connection to this distant continent. The "nobility" of past victimhood is transformed into a form of middle-class nationalism rooted in black business, corporate enterprise, and faith in the American two-party system. Where in this Detroit museum is the history of the role blacks played in the formation of the labor unions, particularly the auto unions?

In the late seventies, I was the only white teacher in a Detroit CETA (Community Education, Training and Action) program that taught social studies to sixteen-year-old black high school dropouts to prepare them for a high school diploma equivalency exam. One day, a successful African- American lawyer visited my class at the invitation of the program director. Facing a group of impoverished, barely literate teenagers forced to drop out of school to work at low-paying dead-end jobs while caring for ailing parents or children at home, the lawyer regaled them with a speech about the American Dream, urging them to believe that they could be whatever they wanted to be. The students stared bleakly after him as he left, understanding something he couldn't or wouldn't: *oppression really oppresses*. The high-minded aim of inspiring those unable to escape the grip of poverty and suffocating circumstance means little without the opportunities and support necessary for success—adequate jobs, housing, and education. The kids *knew* that the American Dream, except for the extraordinarily gifted and unusually lucky, was for somebody else.

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The message of the Museum of African American History is not really designed for them either, but for the more affluent layers of society who already have a much better chance of realizing their aspirations. While seemingly focused entirely on race, the museum is ultimately about class. The future of "black history" is presented as striving for a climb up the corporate ladder that, according to the teleology of the narrative, just takes *will*, because it is assumed the opportunity is already there. The exhibition consigns the struggles of poor and working-class black Americans, their militant organizations, their conflicts, and their allies, to a murky obscurity. This selective history not only depoliticizes and impoverishes the past, but veils the memory of thousands of courageous men and women who won many of the gains enjoyed by blacks today. Isn't this also a crucial part of the story? ●

DORA APEL is a professor of modern and contemporary art history at Wayne State University. Her book *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing* is forthcoming from Rutgers University Press.

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"CCA majority shareholder to sell stocks:
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- The Tennessean, May 19, 2001

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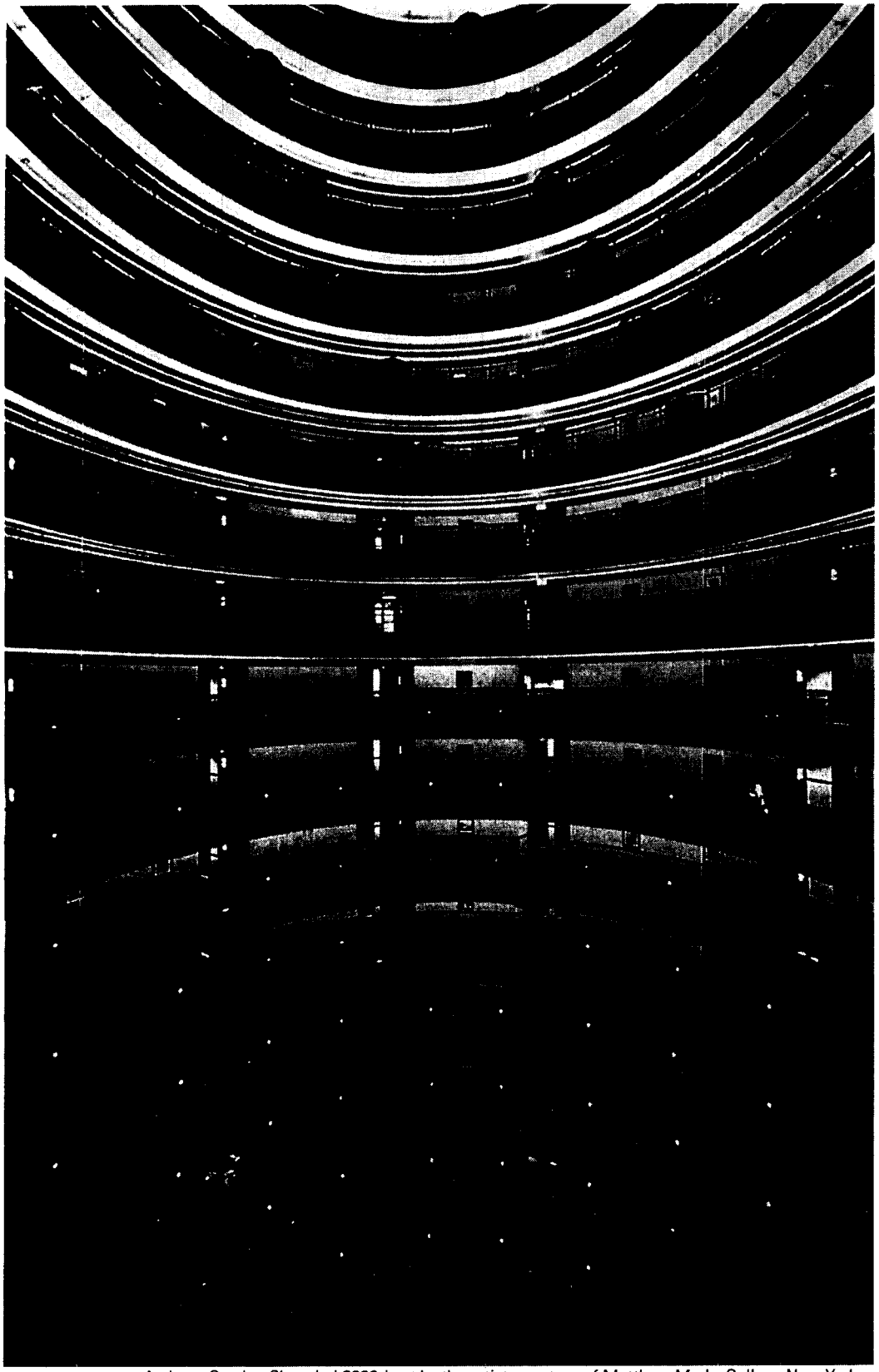

Andreas Gursky, *Shanghai 2000*. Lent by the artist, courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, Monika Sprüth Galerie, Cologne, and the Museum of Modern Art.

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Andreas Gursky: Global Photographer

Michael Rustin

SOMETIMES the essence of a societal moment is well captured by an individual artist. Such is the case for German photographer Andreas Gursky, whose work—displayed this spring in his first retrospective (1984-2000) at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)—captures much of the contemporary essence of globalization. Whereas the forms of modernity seem to be imposed forcibly on the world in the work of the pioneers of modernism, they return to us in Gursky's photographs from a world already fully modernized. We experience modernity not only as viewers of these images, but also through identification with our surrogates—the mostly anonymous human subjects—who are depicted.

Gursky's photographs are high-tech productions: they are huge, saturated with color, and call to mind a hyper-naturalism reminiscent of the heightened reality of cinema. Digital technologies have enabled Gursky to create a vantage point that is more comprehensive than what is available to the unaided human eye, both wider in angle and deeper in focus. The images combine the artifice of painting with the naturalism of photography. Their formalism and coolness of approach avoid confusion with all but the best commercial photography. (Gursky was once a commercial photographer.) They refuse advocacy or direct statement, except perhaps in some implicit advocacy of the art of architecture.

Gursky depicts a society of spectacles. Photographed in vast arenas are a rave, boxing match, rock concert, the Winter Olympics in Albertville, and the 2000 Soccer World Cup in Amsterdam. Travel/tourism—now one of the world's largest industries—also figures prominently. There are photographs of Niagara Falls, Schipol Airport, people at a mountaintop ski restaurant (these are almost the only human figures seen close up in the show), and distant lines of skiers in the Alps. There is a memorable photograph of a tiny cable car crossing a snowfield with hardly a visible support.

Although Gursky does not labor the obvious, one does not look long at the photographs without grasping where power lies in this world. He produces images of stock exchanges, vast trading floors, and such architectural icons of global finance as the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. There is a stunning diptych of the boards of directors of various German corporations seated in line, politburo-style, against the backdrop of a snow-covered mountain. Looking up at them from below are the anonymous shareholders, seen as if from the back of a hall. Floating above the board members—more substantial and familiar than their names or faces—is a line of corporate logos.

The economic world is also featured in photographs of the Siemens factory interior in Karlsruhe, the port of Salerno, immense horizontal displays of high-fashion shoes and sneakers, and a 99-cent supermarket interior depicted in its horrible synthetic colors. Facing billboards that display the Toyota and Toys "R" Us logos remind us that images like these need nothing else to tell their story. The Olympic logo on an Albertville mountainside makes a reflexive point about the image business, as we immediately infer that the sign was placed there for coverage of the events by the world's media.

Gursky shows an environment dominated by the large geometrical forms of industrial modernism: massive buildings, bridges, a semicircular library (whose books, organized by language, evoke the globe), soccer fields, highways, and the Rhine river seen as a semi-abstract horizontal band. One mountain view is

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seen through the aluminium slats of a Venetian blind. The photograph of Salerno's port sets vast lots of new cars awaiting shipment, freight containers, and apartment complexes against the natural curves and colors of the surrounding mountains. Nature is not faring well in the contest with the modern.

THE HUMAN world, too, is shown to possess a definite order but of a less geometric and mechanical kind. At a rock concert, fans' leaning toward the band on the stage is like the tropism of plants toward light. The skiers at Engadine drift across the picture in an immense column, but the minute figures within it also gather in small eddies and clusters. One is reminded of chaos theory, a characteristic intellectual product of the globalized world. The theory identifies a domain of ordered complexity lying between the linear determinism of the classical era and mere randomness and disorder. In the tropisms that bind his massed crowds together, Gursky seems to have found a visual correlate for the "strange attractors" that give coherence to apparent disorder.

Sometimes finding where, if anywhere, order lies is the problem posed by the photographs. What exactly happened on the Amsterdam soccer field, for example, just before the photo was taken? What has the referee with his arm outstretched just decided, and how did one player end up injured on the ground with no one anywhere near him or coming to his aid?

In the Cairo diptych—which appears to be two aerial views of a parking lot taken from the same vantage point—there is another visual and temporal puzzle. How long was the interval between the two shots, and why do the differences in positions of the vehicles and their passengers seem to be so arbitrary and unintelligible?

Where we see more human subjects, as in the ski restaurant at St. Moritz, they appear comfortable enough. Yet the essence of this world seems to be that its human subjects are subordinate within it. They do the things people do–working on a highway or enjoying a rave--but there is little sense that this world is being created by its human subjects. The photographs suggest the opposite: human subjects are being constructed by large, impersonal forces, in particular by the corporations that are the most visible agencies of power.

Indeed, corporations must be among the few institutions, apart from galleries, able to display photographs so large. One can even describe an institution like MoMA, now engaged in a large expansion, as a corporation, branded and merchandised like any other.

As Peter Galassi points out in his informative catalogue essay, Gursky's work has moved from the local to the global—from children playing soccer on a local field to Holland's national team at the World Cup—reflecting his international success. Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Brasilia, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Shanghai, Paris are all global hot spots of different kinds. The "other side" of globalization—the vast agglomerations of the poor in Mexico City, Bombay, or Johannesburg—is largely missing at this point. Given that Gursky refused military service in his youth and chose to work instead in health care, one wonders how long this will go on.

Looking for the "flip side" of global prosperity might pose problems for Gursky's cool aesthetic. It seems important to him above all to show the visual power of this world and its fascination for us. After all, this is a way of understanding it. Still, a hint of how he might approach the other task can be seen in the Cairo diptych, which suggests greater confusion and disorder than any other image in the show. The viewer might think the two photographs depict a disaster of some kind, although this does not seem to be the case. Yet they do suggest possibilities of representing other kinds of order and disorder in a globalized world than those to which Andreas Gursky's travels have taken him so far. ●

MICHAEL RUSTIN is the editor of *Soundings*.

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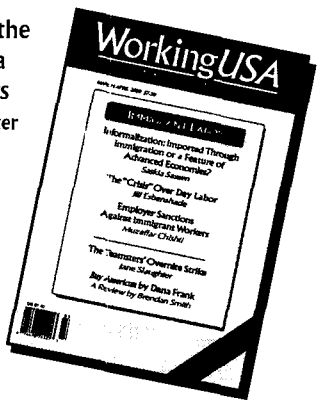

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'I Thought You Said She Worked Full Time'

David Glenn

SEARCHING FOR AMERICA'S HEART: RFK AND THE RENEWAL OF HOPE
by Peter Edelman
Houghton Mifflin, 2001 262 pp $26

THE PRICE OF CITIZENSHIP: REDEFINING THE AMERICAN WELFARE STATE
by Michael B. Katz
Metropolitan, 2001 469 pp $35

THE LONDON feminists at the center of George Gissing's 1893 novel *The Odd Women* have a vision: They will train unmarried women to perform clerical work. A strong foothold in a (relatively) dignified occupation should give their students freedom and independence. Wage labor will be their ticket away from the sexism and superstition that drained the souls of middle-class Victorian women.

It's an attractive vision, and a prophetic one. In the last century, the labor market, for all its injustice, has allowed millions of women to fight their way partly free from the cult of domesticity. But there's a wrinkle: Gissing's characters (like the author himself) have an impatience—sliding into contempt—for women who are not *already,* by their lights, free and independent citizens. "The vast majority of girls. . . must, if they are not to be despicable persons, somehow find serious work," says Mary Barfoot. When they daydream about reform, these characters sometimes move toward the extremes of Fabian tyranny:

> "I have a theory that when an engagement has lasted ten years, with constancy on both sides, and poverty still prevents marriage, the State ought to make provision for the man in some way, according to his social standing. When one thinks of it, a whole socialistic system lies in that suggestion."
>
> "If," remarked Rhoda, "it were first provided that no marriage should take place until *after* a ten years' engagement."
>
> "Yes," [Everard] assented. . . . "That completes the system. Unless you like to add that no engagement is permitted except between people who have passed a certain examination; equivalent, let us say, to that which confers a university degree."
>
> "Admirable. And no marriage, except where both, for the whole decennium, have earned their living by work that the State recognizes."

Notice how Gissing's characters have moved the goalposts. They want all citizens to have independent, dignified labor—but they also believe that only highly skilled (and absurdly self-denying) people can actually earn much dignity. Beneath the surface of their expansive reformist rhetoric lies a fear and loathing of their not-so-skilled, not-so-independent compatriots.

A similar kind of moving target confronts low-wage workers and welfare recipients in the United States today. The half-truth at the center of the last decade's welfare reform is the notion that work provides independence, dignity, and stability. But when welfare recipients move into the labor market, are they welcomed with open arms as fellow citizens? Not exactly. Many of the same institutions that have fought hardest for welfare reform have also been laboring to *minimize* the dignity and stability of U.S. low-wage jobs—by fighting unions, resisting minimum-wage increases, dropping health benefits, raiding pensions, attacking workers' compensation, and weakening unemployment insurance. This is a central theme of both Pe-

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ter Edelman's and Michael Katz's important new books: U.S. welfare policies shouldn't be looked at in isolation, but as part of a much broader fabric of public and private social insurance. Only by studying this larger picture can we intelligently argue about the fundamental questions of work and family that are conjured by the word "welfare."

The two books raise similar questions, but are very different in tone and range. Katz's *The Price of Citizenship* is a dense historical overview of U.S. public assistance and social insurance policies. Although his sympathies are clearly on the left, Katz is scrupulous about presenting a broad range of argument and cautious about offering policy presciptions. Edelman's *Searching for America's Heart* is a much shorter and more idiosyncratic work, built partly around memoirs of his years as a staffer for Robert Kennedy and his later tenure as an official in Bill Clinton's Department of Health and Human Services, from which he resigned in protest after Clinton signed the 1996 welfare reform bill.

THE ANIMATING question of Edelman's book—it also hovers in the background of Katz's—is how the United States moved so quickly from the mood of 1965, when the federal government dramatically expanded the public safety net, to the present moment, when cash welfare entitlements have been abolished and congressional leaders are eying the privatization of Social Security and Medicare. Katz offers one answer to this question: the Great Society, for all its ambition, did almost nothing to bridge the historic divide between U.S. social insurance programs (mostly tied to employment) and U.S. public assistance programs for the long-term unemployed, which have always been stingy, invasive, and perversely designed.

> [B]y the late 1950s, all the pieces needed for a narrow, derogatory definition of welfare had fallen into place. Public policy had cemented a wall between public assistance and social insurance. Social insurance had drained public assistance of most of the sympathetic or "deserving" poor.

Great Society programs—together with the welfare rights movement of the 1960s—dramatically increased Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) rolls, but they failed to address this fundamental divide. Both Edelman and Katz mention a debate from the early months of Lyndon Johnson's administration: Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz proposed a large-scale public jobs program that would have attacked poverty by transforming local labor markets. "[B]ut that would have been expensive," Edelman writes, "and President Johnson turned him down, opting instead for community action. . . and for a series of items to help children and young adults be better prepared for the job market." Eight years later, the Nixon administration floated an unsuccessful proposal for a universal guaranteed income, contingent on participation in work or training programs. This plan was far from perfect—it would have provided income at only around 60 percent of the federal poverty line—but at least it would have unraveled the knots in which AFDC and its successors tie their recipients. (If recipients earn outside income or choose to form a two-adult household, they quickly lose all cash benefits.) In Butte County, California, where I live today, roughly five thousand households receive time-limited welfare benefits. At the same time, the county district attorney's office has nearly three thousand open welfare-fraud investigations, which involve snooping in bank accounts and backyards for signs of unreported income and "men in the house."

The failure of proposals like Wirtz's and Nixon's meant that many AFDC recipients continued to be radically disconnected from the labor market. As the economy softened and real incomes stagnated, especially after 1973, AFDC recipients were ripe for demonization as parasites on the labor of taxpayers. At this point—in the absence of strong popular movements for full employment—it became all too easy for politicians to blame the social crisis of the inner cities on a single cause: welfare. The punitive, cold-turkey model of welfare reform enacted in 1996 brought that debate to a predictable conclusion.

"Where were all the liberals while this was occurring?" asks Edelman. "[T]hey never described the structural changes in the economy in terms that adequately explained why people

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across a wide income spectrum were losing ground at such a rapid rate. They left the field too open to those who were blaming welfare for everything."

Where were the liberals, indeed? This is a crucial question, but Edelman has surprisingly little to say about it. If we look back to the 1970s and 1980s, we can identify several unhappy trends: The labor movement was devoting fewer and fewer resources to organizing; too many U.S. radicals were still celebrating Leninism and/or plunging into hyperlocalized "neighborhood organizing" projects; and the D.C.-based liberal policy world was drunk on post-*Roe*, post-Watergate complacency. The conservative movement was utterly corrupt, they believed, and in any case the courts would step in to fix our injustices. None of these postures was conducive to building an aggressive, sustainable movement to end poverty and bring corporate power to heel.

Unfortunately, the structure of Edelman's book undermines a full discussion of these questions. He has a great deal to say about the personal virtues and misdeeds of RFK and Clinton, but makes few systematic arguments about how the external political environment made Kennedy's and Clinton's actions possible. Edelman is certainly aware of popular movements—he writes respectfully of the United Farm Workers and Boston community organizers—but in the book's telling they seem to come and go like the weather. Hence the gauzy metaphor of Edelman's title: once America had "heart," and now that heart seems mysteriously to have been misplaced.

Within its limits, Edelman's book is often compelling. In his celebration of RFK, he manages to avoid hagiography. Indeed, Edelman tells us that he was bitterly angry with Kennedy during the last few days before his assassination, because of a crude appeal Kennedy made to the racism of California suburbanites: he "accused [Eugene] McCarthy of wanting to transport to Orange County a large number of blacks who were unprepared to live there." And he convincingly argues that RFK struck the right balance in the late-1960s battles over welfare policy: he fought for increased benefits *and* for programs that would reconnect AFDC recipients with the labor market.

> The essence of RFK's domestic prescription was jobs. "Work," he said over and over, "is, in a real sense, what this country is all about." Work and not welfare, although he strongly opposed solving the problems of welfare "by slogans—by getting tough—or cutting back, by making the system even more harsh and punitive than it now is." Nor did he propose work in isolation. "Providing a man a job" is "the most important step we can take, [but it] will not improve the schools his children attend or assure that medical care will be available even though he can't afford it. . . [A]ction on all these matters in concert will build a community."

This is excellent rhetoric (especially if we mentally correct RFK's sexist assumptions about work and parenting). But in his liberal-technocratic way, Kennedy probably failed to appreciate just how radical these notions were. True full employment, at a living wage, would completely transform the playing field for hundreds of thousands of U.S. low-wage employers. If we eliminate what some economists have called "threat labor"—the millions of workers unemployed and in prison, who serve as object lessons to the working poor—the structures of power in our workplaces and stock exchanges would be very different. Kennedy's call for family-supporting jobs may sound like homespun American virtue, but a serious effort to guarantee such jobs would require a far tougher battle than, say, the creation of Medicare.

Katz's *The Price of Citizenship* sheds a different light on the where-were-the-liberals question. Because the U.S. welfare state is such a complex hodgepodge of public programs, private charity, and private insurance, many potentially progressive interest groups have historically been nervous about expanding the public safety net, lest they lose their own bird-in-the-hand niches. Samuel Gompers's American Federation of Labor, for example, opposed the creation of public unemployment insurance and compulsory public health insurance, arguing that unions alone should protect their members. As recently as 1993, the AFL-CIO was reluctant to throw its weight behind Clinton's health reform plan.

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There is a plausible case to be made that the 1996 welfare reform law will, perversely, strengthen the safety net in the long run by bringing labor and other interest groups together into new alliances. Katz quotes a former Clinton Health and Human Services official named Olivia Golden, who hopes that the law will bring a shift toward "seeing [welfare] recipients as workers, as fellow citizens." If America's poor are perceived as "fellow workers"—so this argument runs—the public will be more likely to support decent public policies, not only for the very poor but for the broader working class.

THERE IS REASON to believe that something like this is actually happening. In 1996, the AFL-CIO took the lead in fighting for an increased minimum wage, a victory that benefited not only union members but millions of other workers. And many states have recently created (imperfect, fragile) new child care and health care programs to accompany welfare reform. In Milwaukee, the city whose welfare rolls have dropped most dramatically, a growing coalition of churches, neighborhood groups, and unions has been waging an aggressive campaign to improve unemployment insurance and to reform Wisconsin's bankruptcy laws, so that workers' back wages will be paid before creditors. (Meanwhile—as if to prove Golden's point—a welfare rights group's campaign to denounce the financial misdeeds of Milwaukee's private welfare agencies has attracted much less attention and generated much less energy.)

On the other hand, the enactment of welfare reform has not stopped the drive toward scaling back and privatizing other elements of the safety net. Social Security "reform" may have dropped off of President Bush's agenda for now, but there is every reason to believe it will return. More generally, the public mood contains an ugly, social Darwinist element that hardly matches Golden's hopes of solidarity and fellow-citizenship. On April 3, a woman called in to Laura Schlessinger's radio program and said,

> [M]y question is about our oldest daughter, who is low-mental-functioning, although she is employed full-time. She is a single mom of a nine-month-old boy. . . .And my question is: Should we help her with money, because she will probably never earn very much, and do we link that money help in any way to her continuing immoral lifestyle?

After making the usual inquiries about the daughter's marital history, and so on, Schlessinger asked the caller why someone employed full time could possibly need financial assistance:

> Dr. Laura: What does she need? Not want. What does she need? Is the baby not eating? Then you can take the baby away because of abuse and neglect.
>
> Caller: She can't quite make her bills. So we've helped her with things like gas and rent and car insurance.
>
> Dr. Laura: I thought you said she worked full time.
>
> Caller: She does.
>
> Dr. Laura: Then help her move into a place that she can afford.
>
> Caller: She's on her own, but I think we've found about the cheapest option there is.
>
> Dr. Laura: Okay, so, is she using all her money for her bills?
>
> Caller: Well, she does somewhat.
>
> Dr. Laura: Is she *wasting money*? You're making me work too hard. Okay: Don't give her money. When she doesn't provide for the child, take the child away from her. Because the child shouldn't be with her anyway.

To use Dr. Laura's own bully-therapeutic vocabulary: this is deep denial. Like the polity at large, she refuses to acknowledge that full-time, minimum-wage labor can still leave families far short of meeting basic needs (especially housing). As Katz notes, the 1988 Family Support Act—an important precursor to the 1996 reform—was built on fantasy: "At a time of declining real wages and fringe benefits, [the bill's authors] asserted that after one year, former welfare clients would support themselves—and pay for child care and health insurance—through work. The research with which they justified their claims supported none of these assumptions." The expansion of the Earned In-

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come Tax Credit has eased some of the burden of the working poor, but serious poverty remains. At some point, labor and other social movements may come together to force the nation to decide: if a free adult gets out of bed and works forty hours a week, shouldn't she or he be guaranteed a decent standard of living?

Such a movement to expand the safety net for the working poor is obviously necessary. But as Katz argues, framing social justice *only* around job-holders is a dubious business. As our social programs are increasingly tied to employment, what will happen to people who do not or cannot work? True full employment is not on the horizon, and, "as the definition of citizenship increasingly includes work, more Americans will find themselves, at least from time to time, strangers in their own country, outside the circle to which they thought they belonged."

The solution to this dilemma isn't obvious, and Katz offers no particular prescriptions. (At all costs, though, we must avoid replicating the follies of AFDC: its stinginess, intrusiveness, and perverse incentives against employment and family formation.) Perhaps we will see a revival of the Nixon-era guaranteed-income proposal (something that Ralph Nader occasionally promoted in 2000). The left might also fight for a universal caregivers' allowance of the sort sketched by Eva Kittay and other feminist theorists. Imagine a system that would provide all citizens, regardless of income or sex, five years of support, to be used either consecutively or in small batches, for child-raising or caring for disabled family members. When one thinks of it, a whole socialistic system lies in that suggestion. ●

DAVID GLENN is writing a book on the city of Milwaukee and the future of the social contract.

Making Genocide Thinkable

George Packer

WHEN VICTIMS BECOME KILLERS: COLONIALISM, NATIVISM, AND THE GENOCIDE IN RWANDA
by Mahmood Mamdani
Princeton University Press, 2001 364 pp $29.95

ANYONE WHO sets out to show how genocide can become thinkable ought to have an eye on the line beyond which it becomes justifiable. Understanding genocide carries intellectual and moral risks for the scholar, who functions somewhat like a laboratory scientist undertaking the study of a lethal virus while trying to remain uncontaminated. The title of Mahmood Mamdani's new book about the Rwandan genocide of 1994—the twentieth century's final and most intensive—suggests this dilemma. It's a subordinate clause, provocative in itself, waiting to be completed by a main clause that's bound to be even more provocative. When victims become killers—then what? Do they remain in some sense victims? Are the implications of the killing different from when non-victims become killers, as in Nazi Germany? Is the meaning of the killing somehow changed? Is becoming a killer contained in, explained by, being a victim? Or has some categorical change taken place?

Mamdani's project has all the more potential for going seriously awry given that the tool he brings to bear on the genocide is not empirical fact but critical theory. By his own account, he is impatient with scholarship that requires the "production of facts" to justify itself. Mamdani was born and educated in Uganda, then taught at the University of Cape Town before joining Columbia University as a professor of government and director of the Institute of African Studies. At the outset of *When*

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Victims Become Killers, he announces that he wants "to rethink existing facts in light of rethought contexts, thereby to illuminate old facts and core realities in new light." The apparatus of theory can be hauled in to justify anything; "evil" does not make much impression on the postmodern mind. What's more, Mamdani, who is far more capable of writing a direct and intelligible statement than most academics, occasionally lapses into the kind of language that by its very nature evades the key questions of agency and responsibility. He ought to try writing his next book without ever using the words "postcolonial" and "problematize."

FOR ALL THIS, Mamdani's attempt to make the genocide thinkable is remarkably successful—until he comes to the genocide itself. Then his approach becomes utterly inadequate, and its inadequacy leads him to make some dubious judgments about the genocide and the political landscape left in its bloody wake. Block upon block, he constructs a sturdy-looking argument about the Hutu-Tutsi conflict from the precolonial era to the decades of Belgian rule and the violent upheavals since 1959, all of it preparing the reader for the moment on April 6, 1994, when the slaughter of Tutsi and their Hutu sympathizers began in accelerated earnest. At this point the whole edifice collapses. Theory, which in Mamdani's hands explains so much of the preceding history, is defeated by the empirical fact of eight hundred thousand or more deaths in a hundred days, committed not just by dedicated units of the Armed Forces of Rwanda and the Interahamwe ("those who kill together") militias, but by thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of ordinary Hutus.

The central idea of the book, running straight through, is that Hutu and Tutsi are, above all, political rather than cultural or economic identities. As such, they underwent key changes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that set in motion the logic of genocide. The origins of both groups remain murky, which doesn't dissuade pro-Hutu or pro-Tutsi scholars from trying to describe them, as if what happened in the fifteenth century somehow determines what we ought to think about what happened seven years ago. According to Mamdani and the sources he depends on, the Tutsi seem to have been a distinct ethnic group that migrated into the Great Lakes region from the northeast, while the Hutu were "simply those from a variety of ethnic backgrounds who came to be subjugated to the power of the Rwandan state." When that state was centralized during the reign of Mwami Rwabugiri in the late nineteenth century, the political identities of the two groups clarified and hardened, with the Tutsi holding positions of power and the Hutu subordinate. The really crucial event in the history of Rwandan identity, though, occurred during colonialism, when the Belgians institutionalized this structure with national identity cards. The Belgians also declared the Tutsi to be a nonindigenous group, racially "Hamitic," and thus equipped to bring a civilizing influence to the indigenous and benighted Bantu. In Mamdani's terms, the Tutsi went from being an ethnicity to a race, like Asians in Uganda or Arabs in Zanzibar, with inherent privileges and fateful consequences. Genocide, Mamdani argues, occurs between races, not ethnicities. Ethnic groups merely massacre one another; races try to eliminate foreign races. Belgium's romantic favoritism marked Tutsis with the equivalent of the yellow star.

Up to the end of the colonial era, Mamdani's theory illuminates the commonly accepted historical account in a way that makes this book a genuinely original contribution to understanding the Rwandan catastrophe. But with the so-called "social revolution" of 1959, the relation of his claims to the facts begins to provoke more questions than insights. In 1959 Hutu groups killed several hundred Tutsi and—with the help of Belgian administrators, who had essentially switched sides—inverted the political structure and replaced the Tutsi elite with a Hutu one. The tragedy, as Mamdani points out, is that the Hutu accepted the old Belgian division between indigenous and nonindigenous; only now, the distinction was stood on its head, as "foreign" Tutsi became non-Rwandans who existed in the soon-to-be-independent state at the sufferance of the Hutu. Mamdani makes much of the revolution of 1959, attributing egalitarian and democratic ideals to what, in hindsight, ap-

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pears to have been a mere "ethnic transfer of power," in the words of the French writer Gerard Prunier. Mamdani accords the Hutu desire for power an emancipatory status not borne out by the facts he adduces to it. Everything that followed independence in 1962 shows that the Hutu leaders wanted majority rule, not because they believed in democratic principles, but because they wanted to rule. Mamdani's argument gives him a dubious opportunity to see the four decades since independence in terms of the purported defense of "the gains" of the "social revolution," which makes Hutu violence slightly more legitimate. Anti-Tutsi violence was chronic in the 1960s and early 1970s. Often it followed armed incursions by Tutsi exiles from neighboring countries whose aim seems to have been the restoration of Tutsi power.

Hutu power against Tutsi power: this was the brutal reality of violence in Rwanda from 1959 to 1994, with the far more numerous Hutu committing the far greater share of it (the opposite was true in neighboring Burundi, where the ruling Tutsi elite carried out their own genocidal anti-Hutu campaign in 1972), and defenseless Tutsi civilians inside Rwanda suffering the great majority of deaths. But because Mamdani attributes something higher than a quest for power to the original killings in 1959, the moral ledger is askew:

> Many have claimed that the seeds of the genocidal violence that enveloped Rwanda in 1994 lie in the revolution of 1959. But the revolution was not a bloodbath. The highest contemporary estimate from a credible source of Tutsi deaths during the revolution is around two hundred. The fact is that it was not the revolution, but attempted restoration and the repression that followed, that opened the gateway to a blood-soaked political future in Rwanda.

In other words, if the Rwandan Tutsi exiles had simply stopped their incursions (and given up their claim to being Rwandans), the Hutu government would have allowed Tutsi inside Rwanda to live peacefully, though as second-class citizens without access to political power. The genocide's origin in recent history, then, lies in ten or a dozen unsuccessful raids by armed Tutsi groups in the early sixties. Without making any exaggerated claims about the Tutsi guerrillas as liberators—for Mamdani convincingly shows that they represented the most hard-line faction of Tutsi politics—it's easy to see the enormous disproportion between purported cause and concrete effect in this account. The mistake is in imagining that when victims—which the pre-1959 Hutu surely were—seize power, they do so legitimately and nobly by definition.

STILL, ONE doesn't have to accept Mamdani's claims for the revolution to find his chapters on the years between independence and genocide instructive in light of his theoretical argument. The so-called Second Republic, ushered in by General Juvenal Habyarimana's coup d'état in 1973, changed the status of Tutsi in Rwanda from race to ethnicity, thus opening limited political opportunity to them even as Rwanda became an increasingly centralized state with totalitarian features. In 1990, Tutsi exiles in Uganda who had helped Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement fight its way to power suddenly found themselves declared aliens in their adopted country. Internal politics in Uganda shifted the condition for citizenship from residence to origin. In response, the Tutsi in Uganda went home: they formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and invaded northern Rwanda in October 1990. It was, as Mamdani points out, "a time of internal reform—and not repression—in Rwanda." The Tutsi exiles were throwing gasoline on dying embers. Mamdani, following his own logic, sees the civil war that followed, which had sharply turned in the RPF's favor by 1992, as the direct cause of the genocide. He puts them in the same chapter ("The Civil War and the Genocide"), as if the two were coequal or at least continuous. He blames the Arusha accord of 1993, which nominally ended the civil war while resolving nothing politically, for excluding the most extreme elements of the genocidal ideology known as Hutu Power from the agreement, and he puts the onus squarely on the democratic opposition inside Rwanda, the "donor community," and the RPF. "By putting in place the final squeeze," he writes, "the UN had succeeded in fully polarizing the situation." Mamdani is referring to a UN Security Coun-

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cil meeting of April 21, 1994, which demanded that the Rwandan government fully implement the Arusha accord.

The genocide was already fifteen days old. The situation was already fully polarized. It's as if, with his increasingly single-minded focus on the threat of a Tutsi return to power during the civil war, Mamdani has missed the fact that the Hutu government had already decided that the Rwandan Tutsi must be eliminated. Mamdani still sees a balance of power between the RPF and Hutu Power, but, by April 1994, to be a Tutsi in Rwanda meant to be under a death sentence, with almost nowhere to hide. Mamdani still sees Hutu Power, now fully dedicated to eradicating its perceived domestic enemies, as one among several political players whose interests and fears have to be taken into account. And this distortion continues in the chapters that follow the genocide, where Mamdani insists that the remnants of the genocidal regime have to be included in any regional solution to what has become a regional disaster.

In a book dedicated to making it "thinkable," the genocide itself occupies fewer than twenty pages. It has an air of unreality; after so much talk of politics and identity, the raw facts of murder by machete never reach the page. Without ever being legitimated, in Mamdani's version the genocide becomes one more event in a history of political conflict, rather than a crime of such magnitude that in some ways Rwandan history—ordinary history, the struggle for power between groups, the desire to live in peace on the part of individuals—stopped on April 6, 1994, and when it resumed nothing could be the same again. It is the greatest failure of Mamdani's book that the genocide (not the perfunctory one in its pages, but the one we know from other accounts and from whatever effort our own imaginations can make) comes across not as the culmination of everything he's discussed beforehand, but as something mysteriously apart. Even in the context of Rwanda's bloody history, nothing can prepare us for the scale and intensity of the killing. This failure reveals something about the limits of those tools that Mamdani puts to such good use through large parts of this book. In the end, it must be said that his goal of understanding how thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands, of Hutus could be recruited to kill their friends and neighbors is never achieved. There are some things that political theory can't explain. ●

GEORGE PACKER is the author of *The Village of Waiting*, a memoir about Africa, which is being reissued this summer. His most recent book is *Blood of the Liberals*.

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The Marginaliaist

Keith Gessen

UNACKNOWLEDGED LEGISLATION:
WRITERS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE
by Christopher Hitchens
Verso, 2000, 358 pp $25

ON THE FIFTH floor of Harvard's Lamont Library, near the men's room, there is an old, well-thumbed volume of Dwight Macdonald's *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*. Halfway down page 39, in a 1945 essay called "The Responsibility of Peoples," Macdonald argues that the Nazi death camps were uniquely anti-human. In the right margin, someone has commented, sniffily: "Fellow traveler McDonald neatly overlooks Comrade Stalin's purges, where 2×10^7 people died." Your reviewer unsheathed his pen upon seeing this, but then read further down the margin, where a knotty, penciled hand had done good work. "Fellow traveler McDonald," it said, "had been denouncing Stalin for over a decade." "Fellow traveler 'McDonald,'" yet another student had added beneath this, "is spelled wrong."

A clear rout for the forces of truth—even if, as is no doubt the case, the moral idiot of the first comment never returned to get what was coming to him.

Was Christopher Hitchens involved? Probably not; but his spirit hovered nearby. For Hitchens as a writer is the consummate marginaliaist. The rebuttal and prolepsis are his weapons, the strategic elision his opportunity, the uncomfortable historical fact his ammunition. In his new collection of literary criticism, there are a few meandering essays, but for the most part the pieces are sharply polemical, responding to the pressures of specific literary-political moments—accusations against T. S. Eliot ("Was T. S. Eliot an anti-Semite? What a question! Of course he was.... But are Eliot's poetry and prose hopelessly infected?" No); attacks on George Orwell and the Spanish syndicalists; the deification of Isaiah Berlin; yet another bitter memoir from Norman Podhoretz.

Yes, Podhoretz. This is, by my informal count, Hitchens's fifth contribution to the venerable subgenre of the anti-Podhoretz essay. He is as scabrously funny as ever—"As a literary critic, [Podhoretz] rather resembles an undertaker scanning the obits for trade"—but at this point one has to wonder whether there is a compelling reason, intellectually speaking, to continue engaging a reactionary whom Hitchens himself has nominated as "the most unscrupulous man of letters of our time." And this question, I think, brings the Hitchensian conundrum into focus: it would be nice to ignore the likes of Podhoretz, but their deceptions are piling up. If once in this country there was a Big Lie (maybe two), there are now hundreds of little lies, scattered across dozens of periodicals. "A thing that you have to read," says Hitchens, mostly in earnest, "if you desire to know what's cooking in the culture, is the *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* of the American Library Association." This is a statement that should drive all would-be Hitchenses back to grad school: a librarians' newsletter is decidedly not what one had in mind for the writer's life. But it describes, in a weird way, the work that Hitchens does, and the remarkable quantity of his output. Not a week goes by without Hitchens appearing in some back-of-the-book to dispose of another fraud, slander, revisionist misinterpretation. He is everywhere, perpetually arguing; it's as if mad America had hurt him into prolificacy.

TO LOOK AT a page of Hitchens from afar is to see an impressive amount of quoted material, as though he were giving his opponent due consideration. But Hitchens's

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quoting is of a forensic rather than exegetical nature: he cites only to destroy. "There he stands," Hitchens sums up a long quote from Tom Wolfe, "in all his vulgarity." Responding to Saul Bellow's claim that he was making fun of, rather than practicing pedantry in *Herzog*: "Well, taking things all in all, I think we had better be the judge of that." And, practically rubbing his hands, after a juicy extract from Isaiah Berlin: "Where to begin?"

Begin he does. The Berlin essay is the longest and most exemplary specimen here—one is reminded, reading it, of Lenin's counsel about wiping your opponent from the face of the earth. In a twenty-eight-page wiping, Hitchens marshals an impressive amount of material: Berlin gloried in the company of Realistic Men like McGeorge Bundy, and, explaining his bullishness on Vietnam, referred to himself coyly as "a terrific domino man"; he misunderstood Marx and twisted Kant; not a self-hating Jew, he was, at Oxford, an accommodating one, apparently embarrassed by left-wing coreligionists like Isaac Deutscher and Noam Chomsky. When forced to relate an honorable act, Hitchens seems petulant: "Berlin, normally so eager to please, was later to refuse to shake Menachem Begin's hand when he met him in the lift of the King David Hotel."

If what Hitchens finally manages to assemble before dismissing Berlin as "a skilled ventriloquist for other thinkers" is merely a thick dossier of circumstantial evidence, a volley of grapeshot from the margins, the general conception is clear enough: to Hitchens, Berlin represents that class of realist thinkers, the "it's-more-complicated-than-that" crowd, whose compromises have gutted the Western left. For eight years Hitchens has with mounting fury documented the slippery slope of realism's latest, Clintonian manifestation, from the campaign-dictated execution of Rickey Ray Rector, a lobotomized convict who left the pecan pie from his last meal "for later," to the Monicagate-dictated rocketing of a medicine factory in Sudan. The fulminations against Bill Clinton collected in *No One Left to Lie To* are directed as much at Clinton's apologists, or dupes, as at the president himself—the book could well be subtitled *Le Réalisme des Clercs*.

To this poll-tested capitulation Hitchens counterposes a form of leftist moralism. Clinton's personal behavior is a matter of some concern to him, as is the point, in his recent *Harper's* argument for Henry Kissinger's arrest, that Doctor K's manners are "rather gross" and his wit "secondhand." This has the effect, at times, of implying that the world's problems can be traced to the private neuroses of a few powerful individuals (whom Hitchens has met at *Vogue* parties). He is like Norman Mailer, sizing up the men in the room. But Hitchens's ability to read politics as moral drama opens him to insights that most of his colleagues cannot approach—such as his observation from last August about the problem with Al Gore: "There is a subliminal reason why people do not care for Gore. It translates through feeble poll questions into stupid poll answers, but it is this: In the past eight years, he has jettisoned something unquantifiable that, once lost, cannot be redeemed. He has put his manhood and self-respect into a blind trust, and he can't recover it."

No one else writes like this. It's *ad hominem* and conjectural, but it captures the psychological dimension of Gore's poor showing among the white working class. In his literary criticism, too, Hitchens is best when he is interceding rather than interpreting. Writing of Bellow's *Ravelstein*, a novel about Allan Bloom, he objects to Bellow's suggestion that Ravelstein/Bloom had a death-bed conversion: "Say what you will about the Straussians, they aren't hypocrites or weaklings and they don't burble about heavenly rewards to make up for when the mind has gone.... Bloom should have been allowed this last nobility." Our literary critics do not write this way, it smacks too much of politics; but surely life, and the depiction of life in art, and the organization of life in politics, are moral acts, and must be written about as such.

Hitchens often takes this too far. As a critic, he champions complexity—of Philip Larkin he says, "He was an artist and a thwarted fascist," which sentence is itself a fine statement of (liberal) belief. As a persona, Hitchens is less subtle. In his memoir, *Experience*, Martin Amis tells the story of bringing Hitchens to Vermont to meet Bellow. Driving up from Cape Cod,

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the two must pull over frequently for "the many powerful drinks and the huge uneaten meal without which the Hitch could not long subsist." Throughout the trip Amis implores his old friend not to pick a fight with the neoconservative Bellow. Hitchens promises, and after stocking up with several bottles of wine—"the Bellows are generous hosts," Amis explains, "and Saul knew John Berryman and Delmore Schwartz, but they could have no conception of what they faced here"—they arrive at Bellow's home.

Despite his pledge, our man does not let us down. About halfway through dinner he launches into an extended harangue, which eventually ceases to encounter any resistance, on the subject of Israel: its deceptions, messianic pretensions, its violations of international laws. When, ninety minutes later, Hitchens is finished, there is an uncomfortable silence. Dinner has long since been consumed; no one speaks. "Well," says Hitchens, at last. "I'm sorry if I went on a bit. But Edward [Said] is a friend of mine. And if I hadn't defended him... I would have felt bad."

"My friend Michael Kinsley," "my friend Gail Sheehy," and, always, "my friend Alexander Cockburn" (formerly)—it is a rhetorical construction one encounters almost pathologically in Hitchens. It cannot be, as it initially seems, a short-hand form of full disclosure, because Hitchens is friends with everyone: so either all his journalism is tainted by his contacts or none is. "My friend" could also be an epithet, Hitchens helpfully tagging the animals in the intellectual zoo: "that old coward and fraud," "the little putz," "my friend," "my friend." But this too is false, for Hitchens's friendship crosses party lines and even lines of honor—he is not above being friendly with men he considers scoundrels. To wit: "my old friend Sidney Blumenthal."

The truth is sooner that, like most people who are friends with everyone, Hitchens is friends with no one. When he submitted an affidavit to Congress controverting the sworn testimony of Clinton adviser and his old friend Blumenthal, it was, I think, the result of a principled decision, but one that placed political beliefs above the claims of friendship. And this same relationship is expressed, less obviously, in Hitchens's writing. Reading these essays, one is struck by their wit, erudition, their apposite historical memory. But something is missing; what often appears to be a pose of superiority is closer to a sort of critical rootlessness. Hitchens is unconnected, somehow, to his subjects; the movement that we see in a great critic like George Orwell toward the person or book he is discussing, and therefore toward a re-examination of his own beliefs, is largely absent from Hitchens. When he does practice sympathy, as in the essay here on Whittaker Chambers, he is a powerful writer; when he fails to, which is much of the time, it mars his every word.

THIS DISCONNECT is at least partially a choice that Hitchens has made. There really is something of Chambers in him—the self-dramatization, the either/or thinking, and above all the merciless faith in ideas. Writing in a previous collection about learning, in middle age, that his mother was Jewish, Hitchens argued that he could not let this affect what he believed. "Under the Law of Rêturn," he wrote, "I can supposedly redeem myself by moving into the Jerusalem home from which my friend Edward Said was evicted. We must be able to do better than that."

Better, that is, than thinking tribally, "with the blood." He is, of course, right; we certainly must do better than that—and yet there is an important sense in which we can't. The "choice of comrades," as Ignazio Silone once called it, must also determine where we stand. To neglect this is to lose a great deal; for sometimes, in the end, your blood is right. It might tell you, for example, that a president of shoddy moral character and enervated social policy who nonetheless maintains a commitment to the powerless is still closer to you than his morally abstemious and openly reactionary enemies. It might even tell you, in a pinch, who your friends really are. Which is, I think, the meaning of Bellow's response, as reported by Amis, to Hitchens's explanation that if he'd failed to defend Said, he would have felt bad. Wondered the wise old Bellow: "How d'you feel *now*?"

There is courage in Hitchens's loneliness,

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but the cost has been high. For occasionally, even now, one catches glimpses of the writer he might have become. There is, in this collection, a lovely essay about *The Great Gatsby*, on the occasion (a savvy reviewer will always find one) of its seventy-fifth birthday. Hitchens remarks the peculiar darkness lurking around the novel's edges:

> It gives one quite a turn to find Meyer Wolfsheim, he with molars for cufflinks, hidden Shylock-like behind the address of the "Swastika Holding Company." Pure coincidence: the symbol meant nothing sinister at the time. Still, you can get the sensation, from *The Great Gatsby*, that the twentieth century is not going to be a feast of reason and a flow of soul.

This is very fine, and it exhibits a rare negative quality: Hitchens alludes to the crimes through their opposite; he does not try (it's always the temptation) to enumerate them. There is reticence here, and gentle irony, and the spirit of *Gatsby* is allowed to inhabit the spaces between the lines.

One can only be reticent for so long, however, and Hitchens isn't. "I am quite ready," he said recently, "to be angry and boring and humorless. These are exactly the sacrifices that I think ought to be extracted from oneself." The key word here is sacrifice—not to put too fine a point on it, but Hitchens has read a whole lot of crap. Surely a mind as fierce and agile as his must be bored by another memoir from the Ford administration, and yet just as surely his cultural and political marginalia is a necessary thing.

The critic George Scialabba summed up this tension perfectly some years ago in an assessment of Noam Chomsky and Alexander Cockburn. We live in ugly times, Scialabba wrote, but were it not for the everyday vigilance of Chomsky and Cockburn they would be uglier still: "And that, I imagine, will be the common form of epitaph for the new public intellectuals." He continued:

> Not that they created monuments of unaging intellect, but that they hemmed in everyday barbarism a little. Consider the legacy of such as [I. F.] Stone, Nader, Chomsky, Cockburn: endless engagements with current deceits causing or threatening immediate suffering to a great many actual people. Unlike earlier public intellectuals, they have not written for the ages, but for present efficacy. And the price they have accepted in all seriousness will be exacted: their writings will not live.

Hitchens may yet escape this fate—no one since Dwight Macdonald has been so scathingly funny. Yet there is no question that his political opponents have received the best of him; that even in the sanctuary of his literary criticism, Utility, that winged chariot bound for oblivion, is ever waiting for Hitchens outside the door.

Hitchens gets in. The chariot patrols the margins; Hitchens rides shotgun. Sometimes, it's true, he is unfair. He is too promiscuous with his indignation, so that it loses much of its force. Far too often he disdains to do necessary narrative work, and occasionally he proceeds by innuendo or sins by omission. Writing as quickly as he does, he makes frequent errors, so that you feel he should have with him two burly fact-checkers, as others have bodyguards. His disdain is, all in all, rather monotonous: Hitchens on presidents is like Nabokov on writers—the times change, but the insults are the same. There are political problems, too: In rejecting the bankrupt doctrine of the "lesser evil," Hitchens has fallen into the arms of the bankrupt and quasi-messianic doctrine of the "long view." He has ceded some of his nobler positions and has begun to speak of "liberal authoritarianism"—a strange cliché to hear from a man who's done so much to ridicule the myth of the "liberal media." In short, fighting his protracted war against the mainstream's willful amnesia and smug maturity, Hitchens has allowed his methods to become unsound. I would not say that he's declined, but he has become angrier; he is not less funny, but he is increasingly unamused. His prose has thickened, so that even in the longest of these essays his points feel undigested. He has gone a little stir crazy, on this marginal chariot; his voice—his haughty, urgent, brilliant voice—has grown hoarse. But then: why hasn't ours? ●

KEITH GESSEN is a writer living in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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The Cabinet of Dr. Kracauer

Noah Isenberg

SIEGFRIED KRACAUER: AN INTRODUCTION
by Gertrud Koch
translated by Jeremy Gaines
Princeton University Press, 2000 137 pp $14.95

SOMETIME IN the early 1990s, while I was a graduate student in Germany, I stumbled across a small paperback at one of the makeshift stands that sellers set up in front of university cafeterias. The book was called *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo* (*Streets in Berlin and Elsewhere*) and its author, Siegfried Kracauer, was somebody I knew of only from his psychological history of Weimar cinema, *From Caligari to Hitler*—written in English and published in America, where he was in exile, in 1947—and from his personal ties to the more renowned members of the Frankfurt School, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Leo Lowenthal, and others. What *Streets in Berlin* revealed in its assortment of rich, luminous essays, nearly all of them first published as articles in the 1920s, was that Kracauer had in fact enjoyed a very distinguished career before his flight from Nazi Germany in 1933. Throughout the Weimar years, Kracauer published his writing—a kind of *Kulturkritik*, a philosophical and cultural criticism infused with analytical rigor, elegant style, and heterodox politics—in the left-liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung*. As a writer and editor for the newspaper's illustrious arts pages, the so-called *feuilleton* section, he filed close to two thousand pieces, among them were his serialized examination of Weimar Germany's rising white-collar consumer class, *Die Angestellten* ("The Office Workers," 1930). Kracauer's critique of mass culture in his essays on photography, dance, literature, cinema, and commerce proved incisive in the debates of his time, and has remained relevant to those of our own era as well.

Thus it came as a surprise to me, after reading the small selection of essays in his "street" book, that so little of Kracauer's early work seems to have reached the other side of the Atlantic. Neither of his two novels, *Ginster* (1928) and *Georg* (1934), has been translated into English; the original English rendition of his social biography of composer Jacques Offenbach, *Offenbach and the Paris of his Time* (1937), written during Kracauer's Parisian exile, is long out of print, not to mention incomplete and flawed. And it is only in the past several years that English editions of his writing from the Weimar period have appeared, most notably his anthology of essays *The Mass Ornament*, put out by Harvard University Press in 1995, and the recent Verso translation of *Die Angestellten*, published as *The Salaried Masses* (1998). The English-speaking world is missing an important side of Kracauer. We know the Kracauer who famously unveiled the portents of National Socialism in such classic Weimar films as Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and, to a lesser extent, the Kracauer who reflected on the aesthetics of cinema in his other major American publication, *Theory of Film* (1960). But we have little insight into Kracauer's writings from the Weimar period and from his first years of exile.

AS A MEANS of bridging the gap between the pre-war German works and their postwar American counterparts, Gertrud Koch's brief critical overview of Kraucauer's entire oeuvre, *Siegfried Kracauer: An Introduction* (first published in Germany in 1996 and translated here by Jeremy Gaines), offers a key addition to the still evolving secondary literature. Combining biographical sources and close textual analysis, Koch sur-

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veys the development of Kracauer's thought from his first sociological and journalistic writings in the 1910s and 1920s up to his final work, *History: The Last Things Before the Last*, published in 1969, three years after his death. At the outset of her study, Koch notes the profound difficulty critics have faced when trying to make sense of Kracauer's diverse, and sometimes competing, works and their reception. "Kracauer exists," she asserts, "either as a film theorist or as a distant relative of the Frankfurt School, either as a journalist or as a philosopher, either as an essay-writer or as a novelist." (Kracauer himself showed a certain awareness of this problem, suggesting late in life that he should not be viewed merely as "a film man," but as a "philosopher of culture, or also a sociologist, and as a poet.") Yet, without attempting to attribute an artificial consistency to Kracauer's trajectory of thought, Koch examines, in seven crisp chapters, its development within a broad set of historical and theoretical contexts.

Born in 1889 into an established Frankfurt-based Jewish family, Kracauer was raised amid a variety of cultural currents. His uncle Isidor Kracauer, who played a critical role in his upbringing, was an authority on the history of the city's Jewish community. After completing his studies in architecture, philosophy, and sociology, Kracauer himself participated to some degree in Frankfurt Jewish life, joining a small circle (which also included Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, and Leo Lowenthal) gathered around the charismatic Rabbi Nehemiah Nobel. (He would eventually break with Rosenzweig and Buber, publishing a vociferous critique of their Bible translation in 1926.) It was also around this time, however, that Kracauer's relationship to the far more secular Adorno, with whom he met regularly on Saturdays to read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, began to blossom, as did his work on Georg Simmel, Max Weber, and Edmund Husserl. If anything, the first years of Kracauer's professional life reveal, as Koch suggests, deep commitment to a number of enterprises, from architecture to philosophy, from journalism to cultural criticism, without ever gaining a sense of permanence in any one single place. Indeed, in a 1923 letter addressed to Lowenthal and Adorno, Kracauer sardonically adopted a phrase from Georg Lukács, giving his location as "the headquarters of the transcendental homeless."

Among the paramount concerns that followed Kracauer throughout his career, the idea of homelessness—what he later termed "extraterritoriality"—figured prominently in his intellectual world. Certainly much of this was professionally related, as Kracauer never seemed to fit into the rigidly defined boundaries of the vocations he pursued; he could not find a place for himself in the academy, and his role in journalism, even at the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, was often more of a freelance nature. But there was also, as Martin Jay has pointed out in his essay on Kracauer's "extraterritorial" life, a personal dimension to his sense of marginality: Kracauer not only had a highly noticeable speech impediment, which prevented him from occupying certain stable positions such as teaching, but he also possessed unusual physiognomic traits that set him apart from his contemporaries. In fact, Adorno invoked the term "extraterritorial" to explain how Kracauer looked.

Koch demonstrates the wide-ranging significance of homelessness. As a motif, it crops up in Kracauer's early essays, many of which focus on sites of transience—the hotel lobby, the passageway, the waiting room—observed from the vantage point of an urban stroller, a *flâneur* (or, as Benjamin prefers to call Kracauer, a "ragpicker"). In such works, Kracauer offers critical reflections, sometimes more akin to vignettes, on the symbolic weight attributed to such "in-between" spaces. Not unlike Benjamin's city portraits from the late 1920s or parts of his unfinished *Arcades Project*, Kracauer's essays tend to take shape around philosophical musings and material description. He focuses, in close-up range, on the surfaces, the ornamental realm, of his chosen sites as a means of revealing what lies underneath—an approach he would develop to a much greater degree in his film criticism.

In his fictional work, metaphors of the "in-between" and other variations of "transcendental homelessness" permeate Kracauer's prose. In *Ginster*, for example, as Joseph Roth wrote,

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we encounter a Chaplin-like protagonist, a comical pariah in the modern, war-torn world. He is an uprooted figure, alienated and unable to find his niche in society (Koch likens him to "a Kafkaesque younger brother of Robert Musil's 'man without qualities.' "). In *Georg*, which Kracauer finished in 1934 but which was not published until after his death, the theme is manifested in Kracauer's depiction of the threat of expulsion and the rise of National Socialism. The gripping story of unrequited love earned praise among early readers of the manuscript, including Thomas Mann, who called the work a "great portrait of society." But the fate of the novel mirrored that of Kracauer, who in 1935 wrote ruefully to his friend Benjamin, also exiled in Paris, that the book "has not yet been accepted anywhere."

OF COURSE, it is important to note the renewed intensity in Kracauer's preoccupation with homelessness once it was converted from an idea to an actual condition. After 1933, Kracauer's choice of subject seems to have been determined, at least in part, by his expulsion from Germany. As Koch states, "Exile prompted him to study the emergence of the German collective consciousness, and *From Caligari to Hitler* was intended precisely as such an investigation." This does not mean, however, that his method of analysis changed significantly from the prewar years. As he wrote in 1932 concerning the task of the film critic, "His mission is: to uncover the social ideas and ideologies concealed in your average film and, by means of these revelations, to break the influence of the films wherever necessary." Among Kracauer's early assignments in New York was a critical examination of "Propaganda and the Nazi War Film," commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art (and appended to his *From Caligari to Hitler*), which he undertook as part of the larger collaborative effort among refugees from Nazi Germany—including Adorno, Lowenthal, and Herbert Marcuse—engaged in American-sponsored studies of fascism and totalitarianism.

Kracauer completed the study of propaganda film at the same time he was researching *From Caligari to Hitler*, and much of the controversy surrounding the book's publication revolved around its damning argument about the German "mentality" conveyed in film, an argument that one critic dubbed a "refugee's revenge." The central thesis, which, as Koch points out, rested upon "forty years of film history from memory" (he had little or no access to the films he examines in the book), can be summed up in its final articulation: "Irretrievably sunk into retrogression, the bulk of the German people could not help submitting to Hitler. Since Germany thus carried out what had been anticipated by her cinema from its very beginning, conspicuous screen characters now came true in life itself. . . .It was all as it had been on the screen. The dark premonitions of a final doom had also been fulfilled." Koch provides a balanced reading of *From Caligari to Hitler*, linking the book to Kracauer's earlier work and to such pieces written in American exile as his contemporary interpretation of "Hollywood Terror Films," thereby cautioning against the simple attacks on Kracauer's overstated determinism.

While living in America, Kracauer kept afloat with stipends from the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim, Mellon, Rockefeller, and other foundations, and also by way of a steady stream of freelance assignments from such magazines as *Commentary*, the *Nation*, and *Harper's*. Unlike Adorno and other Frankfurt School associates who returned to Germany after the war, Kracauer chose to remain in the United States, accepting the fate that he later described of the "exile who as an adult person has been forced to leave his country or has left it on his own free will...and the odds are that he will never fully belong to the community to which he now in a way belongs. . . . Where then does he live? In the near-vacuum of extra-territoriality, the very no-man's land."

In a retrospective account of Kracauer's critical legacy, the eminent art historian Meyer Shapiro, who was instrumental in assisting Kracauer's flight from Vichy France to America, poignantly remarked, "[Kracauer] should become better known, not only because of his actual gifts as a writer and as a man with important interests in sociology and theory and philosophy . . . but also [because] he's an example of the type of nonacademic man who is saturated with the standards of German schol-

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arship without belonging to one of the professions." At a time when scholarly disciplines seem to be more rigidly defined than ever, when the academy rarely interacts with the public at large, and when an unconventional career path such as that taken by Kracauer no longer seems viable, the import of his work has a new urgency. Koch does an admirable job of providing a greater sense, if in an abbreviated form, of Kracauer's life and work. Implicit in her reevaluation is the understanding that readers, especially on this side of the Atlantic, still have much to discover. ●

NOAH ISENBERG teaches German studies at Wesleyan University. He is the author of *Between Redemption and Doom* and is currently at work on a book on émigré filmmaker Edgar G. Ulmer.

A Bohemia for Our Time

Casey Nelson Blake

AMERICAN MODERNS:
BOHEMIAN NEW YORK AND THE
CREATION OF A NEW CENTURY
by Christine Stansell
Metropolitan Books, 2000 432 pp $30

ATTORNEY GENERAL A. Mitchell Palmer had barely begun his roundup of foreign-born radicals when alumni of the Greenwich Village "Little Renaissance" of the 1910s began to write the movement's epitaph. Waldo Frank's *Our America* (1919) set the tone for much of what was to come. The great achievement of Greenwich Village was its fusion of political and cultural radicalism—epitomized by the work of the brilliant critic Randolph Bourne, whose early death from influenza in December 1918 marked the end of a moment of extraordinary promise. "With him gone," Frank lamented, "the political and artistic columns of advance—Life and the Machine—are again severed." Artistic modernists and leftist revolutionaries went their separate ways. "The men who listen to [Alfred] Stieglitz have not yet. . .joined him in their mind with the example of Bill Haywood. And the readers of socialistic pamphlets have not heard of '291.'"

Subsequent accounts only vindicated Frank's observation about the divergence of modernist and leftist energies. Writers who had not themselves experienced the pre-war moment moved quickly from a wistful lament for lost Bohemian hope to either world-weary estheticism or Bolshevik militancy as the only serious alternatives to youthful romanticism. For the postwar left, Greenwich Village invited celebration and condemnation simultaneously; it was an adolescent experiment in radicalism that had to be transcended by a more rigorous politics. The communist-leaning *New Masses* that began publication in 1926 promised a more hard-boiled, "scientific," reconstruction of the Village's left-bohemian *Masses*. Malcolm Cowley's classic memoir of 1934, *Exile's Return*, looked back in anger at the Greenwich Village legacy that had inspired his own avant-gardism in the 1920s and concluded that the values of Bohemia were those of a burgeoning consumer capitalism. "Living for the moment," "female equality," "changing places," "self-expression," and other tenets of the Village counterculture were not so much blows against Victorian repression as they were the final nails in the coffin of small-scale proprietary capitalism: all such ideas fit perfectly, Cowley claimed, with "a new ethic that encouraged people to buy, a *consumption* ethic." The failure of Greenwich Village was its lack of political seriousness, and Cowley—then moving into the orbit of the Communist Party—was quick to counsel artists to give up modernist excess for the class struggle. When communists gave

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the Randolph Bourne Award to honor those advocating peace during the years of the Hitler-Stalin pact, the "realist" appropriation of Bohemia collapsed into cynicism.

Not that all twentieth-century intellectuals acquiesced in the postwar separation of cultural and political radicalism. Independent-minded thinkers—who tried to join autobiography and polemic, cultural and political criticism, modernism and libertarian socialism, the personal and the political—made their way to the example of mythical Villagers such as Bourne, Stieglitz, Van Wyck Brooks, Mable Dodge, Crystal and Max Eastman, Emma Goldman, and John Reed in search of a usable past. A reckoning with Greenwich Village became a rite of passage for the "New York Intellectuals" around *Partisan Review* and Dwight Macdonald's *politics*, the Beats, proto-New Leftists C. Wright Mills and Paul Goodman, and second-wave feminists. Alfred Kazin wrote of his thrill in discovering Bourne and Brooks in the late 1930s, as his recoil against the nationalist pieties of the Popular Front pushed him back toward their more compelling intellectual stance. "*There* was the voice I recognized, the vocation I loved," Kazin wrote of the young Brooks of the teens: "I wanted to see a radical slashing insurgency of spirit take over in everything, so that life would be purified and beautiful and everyone would live . . . in the radiance of cultural truth."

By the early 1960s, historians were giving Greenwich Village serious scholarly attention, depicting the pre-war period as "the first years of our own time"—as Henry F. May called it in the subtitle of his magisterial work, *The End of American Innocence* (1959). May's book and Christopher Lasch's study of the emergence of intellectuals as a "social group," *The New Radicalism in America* (1965), remain the best guides to the ideas that inspired the Village renaissance—the intoxicating mix of Whitman, Ruskin, Morris, James, Dewey, Bergson, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Freud, Ellis, Marx, and Wells—that provoked young writers and artists on both sides of the Atlantic to pronounce the coming of a new social and sexual dispensation. May and Lasch rightly saw the Village experiment as the dawn of an American modernist culture and (in Lasch's case, especially) the first glimmerings of a style of radical politics that was attracting a mass following, even as they wrote, in the emerging student left. What Lasch characterized as an "estrangement from the middle class," an "identification with other outcasts," and a "confusion of culture and politics" explained both what was valuable in a tradition that ran from Mable Dodge to the young Norman Mailer, as well as its irrationalist and self-destructive impulses.

With their books, May and Lasch not only made Greenwich Village newly available as a point of departure for discussions about the cultural politics of "our own time," they also reinvigorated the study of intellectuals and the history of ideas. Along with contemporary books on the same period in Europe and Great Britain, such as H. Stuart Hughes's *Consciousness and Society* (1957) and Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* (1958), these studies of Village radicals convinced younger readers that ideas mattered, that intellectuals had played a role as significant historical actors, and—beyond that—that the rich idealistic and historicist currents in trans-Atlantic thought of the turn-of-the-century period represented an alternative to the positivistic, behavioralist, and formalist tendencies that had dominated the social sciences and the humanities in American universities since the end of the Second World War. May, Lasch, Williams, and Hughes cleared a path through the thicket of cold war academic professionalism to an earlier period that, if carefully assessed, promised political and intellectual tools for future innovation.

Not surprisingly, when the radicalism of the sixties and early seventies subsided, Greenwich Village provided the template for historical writing that tried to sort through what was and was not still valuable in the "new radicalism." Biographies of Bourne, Dodge, Goldman, and Reed, studies of the Stieglitz-O'Keeffe group and the *Masses* and *Seven Arts* circles, monographs on the Patterson strike pageant and Armory Show of 1913, and a small library's worth of reassessments of pragmatism and its critics provided an Americanist counterpart to the outpouring of books by former New Leftists who dug through Lukács, Gramsci, Benjamin,

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Adorno, and other western Marxists in pursuit of ancestors and answers. Warren Beatty's 1981 film epic about John Reed and Louise Bryant, *Reds*, was Hollywood's contribution to this genre, with "the teens" standing in for "the sixties" as a site for boomer self-reflection (and self-congratulation).

THE BAR has been set pretty high, in other words, for anyone approaching this subject for the first time, especially as an episode in the history of ideas or expressive culture. Christine Stansell's *American Moderns* makes its contribution by changing the frame for discussing the Greenwich Village moment. Previous accounts of modernity, she acknowledges, have explored the impact of "machines, speed, electricity, explosions, abstraction, the autonomy of language, the autonomy of paint, the death of God, and the divided self. All true, and yet this first full-blown generation of American moderns experienced the imperatives of the age as plainer, if no less complex: the pressures of democracy and the claims of women." Her book gives less attention to the intellectual history of the pre-war "Little Renaissance" than to its social history, particularly its connections to the turn-of-the-century labor and feminist movements.

Stansell draws heavily on a quarter-century of work by historians of women and the working class to recast the story of Greenwich Village as a social movement of sorts and makes use of the work of previous intellectual biographies to liven her account with finely drawn portraits of that movement's most vivid personalities. She traces the roots of Greenwich Village to downtown immigrant saloons in the 1890s, rather than the tony dining halls of Harvard's famous class of 1912, reminds us of the role of anarchism in stimulating unconventional thinking in public and private affairs, and restores Emma Goldman to her place of honor as godmother of an entire cultural movement. Goldman emerges here as a consummate activist-performer whose contribution to American modernism lay in her savvy use of spectacle and her public enactment of a new identity for women. In a characteristic move, Stansell shows how Goldman's influence reached to Margaret Anderson's *Little Review*, a journal long renowned for its modernist poetry and aesthetics, but which appears in this book primarily as a forum for anarcho-feminist radicalism.

Stansell's goal is to show how the "conversational community" that was Bohemian New York was born from overlapping struggles for free speech. It was the fight to speak publicly about unpopular ideas that united members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), anarchists like Goldman, birth-control advocate Margaret Sanger, champions of frank talk and explicit writing about sexuality, the socialist editors of the *Masses* and other dissident publications that drew the heavy hand of government repression during the First World War, and modernists Anderson and Ezra Pound, whose publication of James Joyce's *Ulysses* prompted one of the most important censorship trials of the century. Stansell peoples her "conversational community" with individuals who lived for "free-thought talk," as Max Eastman called it, and who believed that honest conversation between women and men about politics, literature, love, and (especially) sex was the means to self-realization and a more vital culture.

Along the way, Stansell revives the breathtaking promise that feminism held for women and men alike in Village circles. "Throughout the left intelligentsia," she writes, "the emancipated woman stood at the symbolic center of a program for cultural regeneration." Her best sections are on the free love movement, the experiments in "open" romantic relationships among the Villagers, and the earnest efforts of women and men to forge Goldman's ideal of "true companionship and oneness" in love and friendship. And although the story has been told many times before, Stansell's account of the Villagers' ultimately failed efforts to live what Bourne called "the experimental life" has particular poignancy because of the seriousness with which she takes their original hopes for sexual freedom and equality. Only those who hoped for more could be so deeply disappointed. The turbulent romances of John Reed and Louise Bryant and of Hutchins Hapgood and Neith Boyce serve Stansell (as they have previous authors) as cautionary tales of sexual modernism. Traditional male privileges per-

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sisted, and indeed intensified, in an atmosphere of sexual experimentation. Free love and egalitarian friendships ended in a relegitimation of heterosexual monogamy as "companionate marriage" or, worse, as "male feminism with a vengeance."

STANSELL'S ARGUMENTS about the other limits of Bohemia likewise reveal her indebtedness to recent work in social history. Attentive to issues of race in ways that many of her predecessors were not, Stansell makes the necessary point that the color line still held even in this most expansive of conversational communities. She also regrets that so many of the moderns were indifferent to new tendencies in popular culture and belittles their appeal for a reinvigorated high culture as a strategy for assimilation into elite publishing circles. (This indictment of the cultural "elitism" of intellectuals, when confronted with commercialized amusements, is now the reigning orthodoxy at elite universities.) For Goldman, "a sympathetic view of popular culture—and of the polyglot American energies it embodied—was unthinkable," Stansell complains. "It invited the taint of the vulgar, the cheap, the immoral."

Whatever the benefits of this social-historical approach, *American Moderns* is unsatisfying as a new interpretation of its subjects precisely because of its neglect of ideas. Goldman may have been a master performer, Bourne may have lived and died for friendship, but they and other Villagers were people who were passionate about ideas, who were literally drunk on ideas, and any serious account of their lives must ultimately work through those ideas and assess them. It's here that Stansell's book is most disappointing. When she tells us that it was a yearning for "a dash of the 'other'" that led WASP Villagers to seek out contact with immigrants (if not African-Americans), that "everywhere, writers wanted to turn literary life into something big, loaded with transformative possibilities," or that Bourne made "Dewey's faith in civic life into some thing much more personal and playful—even sexy," one winces with the knowledge that intellectual matters of life-and-death significance to the moderns have been reduced to catchphrases. *American Moderns* devotes pages to the efforts of Villagers to make connections in the publishing world, to produce a muckraking literature that "fed the bottom the line," to break into the big time at the *New Republic*, and to perfect new techniques of publicity and self-promotion, while it remains virtually silent on the pragmatism of James and Dewey, the American reception of Nietzsche and Freud, the debates between ethnic pluralists and cosmopolitans, the tensions and affinities between Morrisites and modernists in the arts, and the efforts by Villagers to transcend the division between "high" and "low" in new genres of cultural expression. It's a strange book about intellectuals that inquires so little into what they were thinking.

Even friendship and conversation receive clumsy treatment here. It was not only making friends that mattered to people like Bourne, as much as they liked good company. For the moderns, friendship as lived experience was inseparable from shared reflection and argument about the *meaning* of friendship. One cannot understand why friendship mattered so

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deeply to these women and men without knowing their beliefs—drawn from romantic and republican sources—that friendship could counter the cold rationalism of a secular culture and ground an otherwise anonymous civic identity in fellow feeling. The depiction of Bohemia as a "conversational community," initially so attractive as a retelling of the Village story, itself becomes a tiresome refrain once divested of its connection to the political philosophies that made public speech a vehicle for radical-democratic hope in the teens. After all, weren't the conservatives who gathered around William Buckley's *National Review* in the mid-fifties also good talkers? By such lights, wouldn't the Goldwater-Reagan right qualify as a "conversational community"?

Ever since Greenwich Village collapsed under the combined pressure of official suppression and internal psycho-sexual combustion, intellectuals have dusted off the myth of Bohemian New York and enshrined it as a usable past for their own aspirations. Stansell is no exception. But as much as she seeks to rehabilitate what was utopian in Greenwich Village, the net effect of her approach is ultimately deflationary. Shorn of its substantive ideas, Bohemia looks a good deal less attractive. The ideal of friendship becomes a search for the right connections, the hope for self-fulfillment degenerates into a crass quest for self-aggrandizement, the experimental life provides an excuse for male prowling, and radicalism becomes talk, talk, and more talk. Performance, connections, self-promotion, talk for its own sake: this is Bohemia as the Renaissance Weekend retreat favored by the Clintons in their glory days, a Bohemia for a neoliberal age that has learned to contain unsettling memories of utopias past.

Stansell ends her book with the government crackdown that crushed the IWW, sent Goldman into exile, drove Reed into the arms of the Soviets, and led Bourne to despair about the broken promise of American life. She takes more seriously than previous scholars the apocryphal tales of Bourne's hounding by federal spies and gives this man who loved women and despised liberal hypocrisy pretty much the last word in her history. Yet she also closes with the reassurance that Bourne's is a patriotic story of sorts, and that "America, for all its fits and starts of memory, never quite forgets those who held the country to its grandest, most encompassing possibilities." How Bourne would have howled at such an uplifting eulogy. "Optimism is often compensatory," he warned, "and the optimistic mood in American thought may mean that American life is too terrible to face." Is it not this compensatory optimism, more than anything else, that makes Stansell's Greenwich Village a Bohemia for our time?

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Casey Nelson Blake is professor of history and director of the American Studies program at Columbia University. He is writing a book on the politics of contemporary public art in the United States.

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Photo Fallacies

Editors:

Susie Linfield has so crudely misrepresented what I wrote about James Nachtwey in the *Village Voice* ("Beyond the Sorrow and the Pity," *Dissent*, Winter 2001) that I can't be sure if she failed to understand my argument or just chose to ignore it. Either way, what she puts forward as my thinking on the responsibility of war photojournalists shows a cavalier disregard for my carefully chosen words. Having been lumped in with "postmodern photography critics," whoever those straw men may be, I want to set the record straight.

Linfield writes that "critic Richard B. Woodward castigated Nachtwey for 'the troubling fact that the photographer took his time in framing and lighting the victims,' and compared his work unfavorably with the 'scrappy, often blurry pictures' Robert Capa took of the Spanish Civil War. Perhaps Nachtwey should intentionally muddy his photographs so that, like carefully 'distressed' furniture, they can achieve the kind of shabby chic that critics (and home decorators) now seek out."

Here is what I wrote: "[Luc] Santé notes [in his introduction to *Inferno*] with some discomfort that 'Nachtwey's pictures are always compositions.' But he sidesteps the question of what to do with the troubling fact that the photographer took his time in framing and lighting the victims. When the starving woman in a wheelbarrow reaches her hand toward us, or the child on his knees near death looks up at the camera, we know where Nachtwey was standing when he chose to click the shutter."

Five paragraphs later, in a passage having nothing to do with composition, I praised Capa and Susan Meiselas in the following terms: "In Robert Capa's scrappy, often blurry pictures of the Spanish Civil War and World War II, you can see where he stands in the political fight. Connected to those he memorializes, he is partisan in the best sense. He didn't dress himself up as an artist on the battlefield or in his books. Susan Meiselas's photographs from Nicaragua in the '80s are animated with that same spirit."

In other words, this opposition between "blurry" and crafted pictures that Linfield attributes to me is one of her own invention. I don't love Capa's pictures because they're blurry. I love them because I can tell he was engaged by what he photographed. He hit the beaches with the GIs at Normandy and knew some of those who fell that day and after. Focused or not, his images of the Spanish loyalists often have the casual intensity of family snapshots. Likewise, one feels Meiselas's personal connection to the Nicaraguans she photographed for her book. She revisited many of these same people years later for the film *Pictures from a Revolution*, the most searching self-examination of the moral role for the photojournalist in the midst of world politics (and its depressing aftermath) that I've ever seen. Don McCullin and Larry Burrrows are two more photojournalists whose involvement in the lives of everyone around them in Vietnam is visible in their work and is moving to behold.

Nachtwey, on the other hand, has no allegiance that I can see to individuals but only to airy concepts like human suffering and his own artistic ambitions. He grandly declares himself an "anti-war photographer" as he makes war his business, moving around the globe, from Afghanistan to Zaire, in search of fresh disasters to examine up-close and impersonal. I doubt he knows the names of more than a few of the people whose agony he so lovingly captures in his book. He never stays anywhere for long. That would be impossible, both in emotional and practical terms. There's no time to situate yourself in these foreign countries and perhaps learn the language of the culture you're photographing, not when you're the recording angel for the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and there is so much bloodshed and privation all over the third world and you're on deadline for *Time*. As I wrote in my piece: "He cares little how people live, only how they die."

Linfield ignores my further point that Nachtwey's voyeurism caters to the tastes of the developed, wired world. I have no sympathy for dictators who ban the Western press from reporting on governmental corruption and torture. But one can't help noticing that Nachtwey hasn't included a single American disaster in his book, perhaps because we wouldn't stand for his prying eye. As I wrote: "Would the families of, say, the Columbine students ap-

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preciate a German or French photographer who offered exquisite close-ups of their slain children to Europe's appraising eyes?" I think not. Nor would consumers of magazines take kindly to seeing other Americans treated in this fashion.

But the starving Sudanese on his hands and knees who looks into Nachtwey's lens can't object to being photographed, even if the man's turned head and imploring eyes would seem to indicate some last, helpless gesture of protest. Not only is this person nameless and dead, and thus without legal rights, his kin surely have no clue the picture has been chosen for the honor—if it is an honor—of appearing in *Inferno*. What would they think if they knew? Linfield doesn't dare venture a guess, perhaps because she knows the answer.

To attack Nachtwey's critics, she invents false dichotomies. Just as she imagines that I prefer blurry to composed pictures, she also believes that anyone opposed to the treatment of human misery evidenced in *Inferno* demands that war photographers and viewers "disconnect." As she writes in her caricature of postmodern criticism: "Alas, the viewer is no better than the photographer, for the former's gaze precisely, indeed rather remarkably, reproduces the oppressive power relations that the latter seeks to expose. Naturally, then, moral purity resides in refusing to either take, or look at, such nasty pictures."

Actually, I'm glad Nachtwey is out there recording the horrible things people do to each other every day, and which many of us would rather not know about or see. He is a brave man and a magazine photographer with a keen, elegant eye. I look for his work in the pages of *Time*, which, despite its obvious limitations, offers his images within the urgent context of news reporting.

But what should we make of his career move to break out of the magazine format and present himself now as an artist, with a heavyweight tome of images printed in tritone on deluxe stock to accompany a huge touring show of supersized exhibition prints?

My piece questioned his right to appropriate dead and starving people from around the world and offer them up in this way, as grace notes in his throbbing symphonic score about the human condition. And oddly enough, Linfield, after bravely standing up against those trendy "postmodern photography critics," proceeds to embrace several of the points I made. The lack of context for these pictures also bothers her. Can the scarred survivors of genocide in Rwanda be offered up as art photographs without ever trying to analyze the causes that led to the massacre? She seems as troubled by this as I am. In the absence of any explanation from him, she offers her own: "Perhaps Nachtwey thought his pictures would be more powerful—or closer to the abstract values of 'real' art—if readers were not distracted by text. Or perhaps he wanted to—in the words of that old, erroneous expression—'let the pictures tell the story.' For whatever reason, he has made exactly the wrong choice." (Maybe I need more schooling in social theory, but this position by Linfield—that the meaning of images isn't "pure" but constructed—sounds awfully "chic" and "pomo" to me.)

If what I wrote in the *Voice* read to her like a "resentful tirade" against Nachtwey, that was due to my effort to dispel the air of fake piety that now surrounds him and his work. Early reviews of *Inferno*, such as David Rieff's in the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, wrote of him in hushed, reverential tones. (In Rieff's bizarre, if telling, comparison of praise, Nachtwey is to war photography what Annie Liebovitz is to celebrity portraiture.) Oprah was appropriately moved to tears as she flashed his pictures on the screen while Nachtwey, the square-jawed photojournalist hero from central casting, spoke gravely about his mission. Like Elie Wiesel, he is now treated as a saint for having witnessed so much unspeakable suffering.

I don't buy the act. You can't do this kind of work for as long as Nachtwey has without, at some level, enjoying it, or at least relishing the role you're playing. If only he could admit that globetrotting to trouble spots around the world and putting himself at risk can sometimes be a high as well a soul-shaking horror, I could forgive everything else, including his misguided attempts to blow up his news documents into monumental art. But the older, sainted Nachtwey is incapable of writing a thrilling young man's book like *The Bang Bang Club*, although he appears there as one of the guys, sharing adventures with the pack of shooters as they run around dodging bullets on the front lines. You can't admit to complex motives, to the awful fun of reporting on a war, to being human, when you're the hieratic conscience of photojournalism.

Like *The Family of Man*, apparently one of Linfield's favorite books, *Inferno* reeks of sanctimonious bombast. It deals in generalities when we crave specificity or per-

NUMBERS GAME

A sharp-eyed librarian called to our attention the fact that we numbered Spring and Summer in 2000 with the same number: 199. This means that all subsequent issues were wrong. We're rectifying the mistake with this issue, which is correctly numbered 204. There will be no 203.

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sonal engagement. Like a fashion photographer, Nachtwey fetishizes bodies, not individuals. The suffering people in his photographs are defined for us by their scars and diseases and places of death, not by their names, their possessions, their family, their land. They have no life story except involvement in sweeping historical movements like "New World Disorder" or some such journalistic category. They existed, it would appear, only to be photographed by James Nachtwey.

I'm also not sure that his unflinching stance toward his subjects—Linfield quotes admiringly his famous statement that "there isn't any picture he wouldn't take"—applies to pictures of himself. In 1995, I had an assignment from *Esquire* to accompany Nachtwey into the field. At first we were going to Bosnia, then Chechnya, then the *favelas* of Brazil. But each time, just as we were about to embark, he would change his mind.

I never knew why. Probably he didn't want me interfering with his work, which I understand; and perhaps he felt uneasy about making himself more important than the wretched people in his pictures, an attitude I can respect. But perhaps as well he didn't like the idea of someone watching him as he approached a corpse or an amputee, hovered, changed lenses, moved closer, focused, clicked, and strolled away. For someone as image-conscious as Nachtwey, I don't think that's the kind of complex photograph he wants to be taken.

RICHARD B. WOODWARD
New York, N.Y.

Susie Linfield Replies:

Readers of Richard Woodward's letter may get the impression that the subject of my article was Richard Woodward. This is incorrect. My article was relatively long and included many sources; I quoted Woodward in two paragraphs, each time briefly. I urge interested readers to look up Woodward's original *Village Voice* review (June 13, 2000); they can judge for themselves if his views there support his current claims that he is "glad [James] Nachtwey is out there recording the horrible things people do to each other every day," and that he regards Nachtwey as "a brave man" with "a keen, elegant eye." They will also be able to judge whether I misrepresented Woodward.

Woodward does raise a couple of important questions. He is distressed that James Nachtwey photographed a starving Sudanese man, probably without the man's consent. I am distressed that the Sudanese man is starving, almost certainly without his consent. Woodward protests the infringement of the Sudanese man's "legal rights"; I wonder what happened to his human rights. My piece was an attempt to shift the focus of attention from the former to the latter—to shift it, that is, from an obsession with the inequality and exploitation of "the gaze" to the inequality and exploitation of the world.

Like Woodward, I love Robert Capa's photographs. But Robert Capa's photographs are easy to love. I suspect that in politics, as in personal affairs, excessive grief over the past can be a way of evading the challenges of the present (and future). Nachtwey's photos look different than Capa's because Nachtwey's world—which is our world—*is* different than Capa's. Kigali in 1994 wasn't Barcelona in 1937.

In his letter, and in his *Voice* piece, Woodward suggests that it would be exploitative for "a German or French photographer" to photograph the students killed at Columbine. This startled me when I first read it, and it startles me now. I see no problem with German, French, American—or even Sudanese—photographers documenting the Columbine victims: Why in the world not? Whose delicate innocence are we protecting, and to what purpose? I agree with the photographer Sebastião Salgado, who said in a recent interview, "[T]here is no person in the world that must be protected from pictures. Everything that happens in the world must be shown." This does not mean, of course, that pictures of Columbine would necessarily be illuminating. The *New York Times Magazine* printed photographs of, and interviews with, high-school students in Santee, California after the shooting spree there; most were shocking only in their banality. (*Pace* Woodward, though, Nachtwey's show at

ERRATA

Those pesky gremlins who haunt proofreaders and copy editors were working overtime on our Spring 2001 issue. The secretary of the treasury referred to by Patricia Cayo Sexton ("Dilemmas of the Dollar," p. 34) was, of course, Larry Summers, not University of Pennsylvania law professor emeritus Clyde Summers. And in Corey Robin's review of Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* ("Missing the Point," p. 108), a misplaced phrase changed the meaning of the sentence in the last paragraph of the first column. It should read "In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam, one of our foremost political sociologists and, for a time, philosopher-king of the Clinton White House, seeks to rescue anxiety about the loss of community from just this kind of sentimentality." We regret the errors.

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the International Center of Photography last summer did include a section in which the photographer's "prying eye" was turned on what I, at least, would consider "American disasters," including an Alabama chain gang and homicide scenes in New York City.)

But Woodward's fixation on Columbine raises a larger issue, and reveals exactly the worldview (an increasingly popular one) that my piece critiqued. Columbine was a sad incident, but it is not even vaguely comparable to the genocide in Rwanda, or to the Bosnian or Afghan or Sudanese or Chechen conflicts, or to the fall of the Wall in Berlin or of apartheid in South Africa, all of which Nachtwey has documented. I am not making any judgments about the value of the human lives involved in these various events—which is, I believe, something that no one can do. I am, however, making judgments about the *historic* significance of the events themselves—which is, I believe, something that all of us, as citizens of the world, must do. Columbine is not the historic or moral equivalent of Rwanda any more than the murder of the Lindbergh baby was historically or morally equivalent to the murder of Anne Frank, or the killing of Tupac Shakur was as important as the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, or Martin Luther King Jr., or Chris Hani. To level all events—or even all suffering—is not an expression of humanism, but of its opposite. The impaired ability of Americans to make political and historic distinctions—and the narcissism, isolationism, sentimentality, and intellectual laziness that underlie this failure—is alarming and dangerous. Pity, guilt, and even outrage are not the same as values and convictions.

Nader, the Greens, and the Democrats

Editors:

I was disappointed that your Arguments section on Ralph Nader in the Spring 2001 issue suffered from the same flaw as nearly every other debate I've read about the wisdom of his campaign—it treated the Democratic Party as a monolithic entity. I would expect Ellen Willis, who criticized Todd Gitlin and Sean Wilentz for painting Nader supporters with one broad brush stroke, to not do the same to the Democratic Party. And, I would expect Gitlin and Wilentz to do a much better job of recognizing the factions that exist within the Democratic Party, even within Congress.

Let me preface my defense of the Democrats by first disclosing that I voted for Nader and contributed to his campaign, only the second time I've ever given money to a candidate (Paul Wellstone's brief presidential exploratory committee was the first). But, it is important for Nader supporters, and those who have criticized his campaign, to recognize that virtually every single issue Nader ran on is represented in a piece of legislation introduced by one Democrat or another in the U.S. Congress, often by members of the Progressive Caucus (http://bernie.house.gov/pc/), an increasingly assertive bloc of Democrats in the House of Representatives.

Halt the death penalty? Senator Feingold. Public financing of elections? Representative John Tierney. A more sensible budget framework, including a 20 percent reduction in Pentagon spending and corporate welfare, and large increases in education, health care, housing, social services, etc.? Representative DeFazio. A living wage? Representatives Sanders, Gutierrez, and Bonior. Universal health care? Senator Wellstone, Representatives Conyers, Lee, and McDermott. Reforming the International Monetary Fund and World Bank? Representative Kucinich. Requiring U.S. corporations to abide by high labor and environmental standards in overseas operations? Representative McKinney. Proportional representation? Representatives Watt, and McKinney. Payroll tax relief? Representative DeFazio.

With all these progressive proposals being introduced in Congress, why don't any of them get enacted? I think part of the reason is because too often progressives want to remain "pure" and don't want to sully themselves with the stench of electoral politics. I admire individuals who work on the ground trying to make people's lives better one person, one community at a time. However, that job would become much easier if Congress took on a more progressive face and acted as a partner in this endeavor. That's not going to happen until the left acknowledges that there are decent members of Congress, supports these members, and recruits other candidates to run for office. As Senator Wellstone has pleaded, help these progressives retake the reins of the Democratic Party. Building alternatives to the Democratic Party and working within the party to move it left do not have to be mutually exclusive efforts. I should know. I supported Nader, but I also work as a legislative aide for one of the aforementioned Democrats.

Tom Vinson
Washington, D.C.

Editors:

I was disappointed by the weak arguments posited by Todd Gitlin and Sean Wilentz in their "Memo to Those Who Supported the Nader Campaign" and by the pallid nature of Ellen Willis's response. Gitlin and Wilentz are wrong from their accusatory first sentence ("no small

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thanks to Antonin Scalia—and you"), having forgotton that Al Gore voted to confirm Scalia, right through their list of complaints starting with global warming (just who was it that sabotaged last November's Kyoto meeting?) and including their tears for workers (again forgetting a few facts, such as that the number of Occupational Safety and Health inspections during the Clinton administration were the lowest in OSHA's history). Their memory loss seems to be total in that they refer to Gore as an environmentalist. Surely they jest. They and Willis, in their agonizing over what might have been and what might yet happen, overlook some tangible benefits that have already accrued, thanks to Green voters, of which I happily happen to be one. For example, it seems certain Clinton's protection of the arctic wilderness will stick. The GOP is resigned to losing this one. What no one points out is that Clinton signed off only after it was clear that Gore had lost. It's certain he wouldn't have if Gore had won—that would have been seen as an act of sabotage to the incoming administration (one-upmanship, certain to arouse GOP ire). So we can thank the Greens for the fact of the act. Similarly, Bush's recent turnaround okaying lower arsenic levels is a Green bonus. It, too, was one of the last acts Clinton signed off on, safely after Gore's defeat. Nothing new had been learned about arsenic in eight years: Clinton could have signed that act in his first year in office. Surprisingly, Bush is also reducing subsidies to the Import-Export Bank, is cutting farm subsidies that usually go to corporate giants, has proposed higher fees for broadcast licenses, and okayed Clinton's privacy protection act—all of which should be cheered by everyone on the left. Aside from the latter, would any of this have happened under Gore? Hardly. Another benefit is that now Democrats can behave like Democrats and oppose the World Trade Organization and rampant globalization. If Gore had won, this would have been impossible because he supports both. The shift is already happening. Recently my congresswoman, Nita Lowey (normally a big booster of globalization) declared she won't support fast track legislation. Al Gore had promised to seek fast track approval. Had he won, Democrats would have been forced to go along with it. If we can kiss fast track good-bye, thank the Greens. (Although reforming the Democrats is a worthwhile endeavor, we should remember that the Green hope is for a reformed, truly democratic system, currently beyond the vision of the two major parties.) Gore showed his mettle with a proposed military budget $80 billion larger than Bush's; and in Miami, when he sided with Elian Gonzalez's cousins; and more recently at Columbia University, where, after insisting on teaching an "off the record" journalism course, he didn't have the guts to admit it was his call and let Columbia take the rap. What a guy! Yeah, Bush is no bargain and none of the above should be construed as a defense of the man. There are certainly many more horrors to come. But Gore was no bargain either, and no friend of the environment no matter how many books he's written.

KEN WEISS
New Rochelle, N.Y.

Editors:

Todd Gitlin and Sean Wilentz argue ("Memo to Those Who Supported the Nader Campaign," Spring 2001) that the Greens are just a social movement, not a political one, and that they will never exert real power and influence in national politics. They hit the nail with their arrogant heads. For the foreseeable future, the Greens won't be cabinet secretaries or senators making policy or cutting deals. No kidding! They will, however, be the first progressive party in decades to make a principled and articulate stand against the corporatization of American politics. The simple fact is this: after the 1960s, all the self-congratulatory radicals of the New Left either got tenure somewhere or just gave up on politics. The consequence has been that there is now no meaningful progressive wing of the Democratic Party. The party is a hopeless consortium of jaded fundraisers chasing after the same donors who give to the Republicans. All the Washington liberal interest groups and all the ex-radicals at the elite universities have failed miserably in stopping the resulting rightward drift of the Democratic Party. What we Greens did last fall was to take a hard-nosed, real-world stand against the rightward drift of American politics and the Democratic Party. And it cost the Democrats the election. But it was a triumph for the set of ideas that the Democrats abandoned about thirty years ago. If the Democrats want the presidency anytime soon, they had better get the Green message.

JOHN RAINWATER
Denver, Colorado

Editors:

I want to respond to Todd Gitlin and Sean Wilentz's bitter critique—perhaps assault is a more appropriate word—of Nader voters in the Spring 2001 issue. They portray the Nader supporter as recklessly utopian, excessively moralistic, and just downright ignorant of and indifferent to the realities of the American political system. On the contrary, there was a remarkable diversity of opinions, ideas on strategy, conceptions of politics, and stated

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goals articulated during the campaign. Everyone supporting Nader did not agree with his characterization of the differences between Republicans and Democrats, his decision to campaign heavily in swing states, or his focus on issues of social and economic justice. Some who applauded his call for a "deep democracy" were often reticent to embrace a presidential campaign, preferring to concentrate on local politics. I mention these, only a few of many examples, to counter the monolithic image of the Nader voter given by Gitlin and Wilentz.

In addition, Gitlin and Wilentz do not simply criticize Nader and those who voted for him, they demand an acknowledgment from us that we put George W. Bush and his right-wing entourage into the Oval Office, yet they show little ability to practice self-criticism. Do they consider the Clinton factor, as Al Gore himself did? What about Gore's swerving between populist and Democratic Leadership Council positions throughout his campaign? How, in such a tight race, could Gore lose his own state of Tennessee? With its eleven electoral votes, Tennessee would have easily clinched the election for Gore and allowed him to escape the debacle in Florida. Though Gitlin and Wilentz remind us of the outcome of the 1968 election (in what Ellen Willis rightly points out is a highly dubious interpretation of those events), I would remind them of the 1984 election, when Walter Mondale, despite being crushed by Reagan in the race, still secured his home state of Minnesota. Are Nader voters to blame for Tennessee or the loss of Arkansas, the home of his longtime partner? Moreover, one might ask of Gitlin and Wilentz, and here I repeat a criticism made by Ellen Willis: would they only have been satisfied if half of or perhaps every single Nader vote had gone to Gore? Such a position comes dangerously close to that of the *New York Times*'s editorial page, which repeatedly called for Nader to leave the race to avoid throwing it to Bush. It is a position that I understand as fundamentally undemocratic, no matter how fervent their support for the Democratic Party. Despite the bitter polemics between Gore and Nader supporters, many of us who backed Nader are ready to move forward and build progressive coalitions at all levels of our polity and society. Like Ellen Willis, I feel optimistic about the grassroots activism and energy generated by the campaign and by the efforts to join with the existing movement challenging neoliberal globalization with an unabashedly left-wing critique. I would add that there are also real opportunities to work with the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, with people like Bennie Thompson, Paul Wellstone, and Russ Feingold. For all their warnings about utopianism, the spirit that comes through in Gitlin and Wilentz's piece is one of mutual contempt and renewed sectarianism from the center to the left. It is my hope that this spirit does not carry the day.

JASON DAWSEY
Chicago, Illinois

Todd Gitlin and Sean Wilentz Reply

So Al Gore ran a lousy race! But we didn't support Gore because we thought him ever-reliable. Electoral politics can't rest content with "a principled and articulate stand." It's a place for getting results, period. And on the principle front, what about St. Ralph's less-than-holy crusade? Repeatedly, Nader said he would campaign one way, then did the opposite. He disparaged the importance of *Roe v. Wade*, and his signature stance on trade only barely distinguished him from Pat Buchanan.

The Senate Democrats' craven unanimous support for confirming Antonin Scalia in 1986 (after rejecting Robert Bork) is only one example of why the energies of the left need to be continually applied where they can do some good. Ken Weiss claims that Clinton's late-term executive orders were offerings to the Greens, but offers no evidence that Clinton would have refrained from lowering arsenic levels, protecting the Arctic, and so on, had Gore won. The far more plausible reason why Clinton waited so long is that, had he tried earlier, the vicious Republican Congress would once again have undermined him.

As for the Nader campaign now, it sounds as though some of his supporters will try to move Democrats to the left in states that are already Democratic. But what will they offer in borderline states in 2002 and 2004? Would they have helped Gore win Tennessee last time? We think not. In fact, they're spoiling for an eight-year Bush reign, after which, they imagine, the left will have revived itself—and to hell with the country 'til then.

Ellen Willis Replies

Re: the Democrats not being "monolithic." As Freud pointed out, individual and group psychology are not the same. There are many Democratic legislators who, as individuals, may have fine politics; but as a party, the Democrats have consistently failed to offer any serious resistance to the country's rightward trend. Nor have liberal Democrats made any serious attempt to fight the direction of the party since 1992. In 1994, for instance, neither Paul Wellstone nor any of the House members cited by Tom Vinson as champions of universal health care made the slightest criticism of Bill Clinton's conserva-

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tive, pro-insurance company health care proposal, let alone uttered the words "national health insurance." As a result, the administration's proposal became the left wing of the debate and was treated by the Republicans as if it were the essence of bolshevism. In my view, a single-payer proposal would have been both easier to understand and far more popular—and I have no doubt that some compromise resembling the Clinton plan would have passed. Furthermore, had progressive Democrats stood up for their ideas instead of collapsing in a demoralized heap, I don't believe the Gingrichites would have won the House. The truth is that in the process of losing their nerve, the Democrats have become lousy game-players besides.

NIMBYs and the American Dream

Editors:

In "Suburbs, Status, and Sprawl," Benjamin Ross argues correctly that NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) opposition to needed housing development—including both non-market housing and market-rate housing—that is situated near transit lines can not be explained by the supposed effects on neighboring property values cited by the neighbors themselves. His argument that NIMBYs are motivated primarily by status concerns is far too limited. I suggest that we need to look more at the cultural roles of private property and individualism in America.

In Berkeley, for example, where I am the acting housing director, a neighborhood of predominantly working-class, African-American homeowners has strongly opposed development of an apartment building on the other side of a major street that is a designated bus corridor. They have been readily joined by the gentrifiers now moving in, and the views expressed show no great differences. This is hardly status snobbery and image maintenance; rather, it expresses fears that need to be respected, however wrong they may be, and [reflects] the use of tools that people are given in American culture to deal with those fears.

NIMBY, after all, is the same response that people have to construction of nearby nuclear power plants or toxic-waste dumps. In those cases, the NIMBY strategy is the perfectly respectable one that if the developers find nowhere to build, society will have to find alternative and healthier means of producing power and ways to produce goods without generating non-recyclable wastes. Obviously, opposition to affordable housing has not the slightest chance of persuading capitalist society to cease producing people with low incomes.

The NIMBY phenomenon reflects what Daniel Bell and others have referred to as the cultural contradictions of capitalism. In this case, the critical contradiction is in the public understanding and use of private property rights. Economically, private property is the dominant means of producing commodities (in this case, housing), but private property is culturally dominant as well, so that the most widely understood means of protecting the sphere of private life (in this case, the home) from anything new and the threat of change brought about through the "creative destruction" of the realm of the market, is through the use of a basic characteristic of property rights, that of exclusion.

Opposition to increased population density is pervasive in American society, despite the many environmental and cultural benefits of denser development. We are not in a society where cooperative action is celebrated and conflict resolution skills taught to everyone from childhood. Rather, we are in a society that idealizes the individual and sets aside the home as the "haven in a heartless world." NIMBYs are using the ideals and tools of self-defense that are provided by the larger culture. It is up to those of us with higher aspirations to help spread better ideals and tools. We will only succeed if we approach our fellow citizens with respect, however much we disagree with them.

STEPHEN BARTON
Berkeley, California

To Letter Writers

- *We welcome succinct letters from our readers. But because we have a long lead time for each issue, you have to send us your letter within three weeks of getting an issue of* Dissent *in order to get it into the next issue.*

- ***Letters must be no more than 500 words**, typed, double-spaced, and carry the full address and name of the sender. We reserve the right to edit letters down to fit our space and to choose which shall be printed. We are unable to acknowledge letters. Letters will not be returned to senders unless they are accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. We accept E-mail submissions to editors@dissentmagazine.org, but request that you also provide a street address.*

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MADISON, Wisconsin, 1969: Late that spring, after the largest antiwar marches and the student strike that brought out the national guard, the graduate teaching assistants at the University of Wisconsin made labor history. They voted in favor of union representation, creating the nation's first teaching assistants union recognized by a university. The union—called the Teaching Assistants Association or TAA—signed its first contract in 1970.

In the Hollywood (or West European) version of this story, Madison 1969 would have launched a heady period of unionization for teaching assistants (TAs) around the country. Instead came thirty years of dragged-out battles with relatively few victories. Of almost four hundred doctoral degree-granting institutions in the United States, fewer than twenty-five have recognized TA unions. Until last November, all were at public institutions.

Administrators in halls of ivy operate like all anti-union bosses in the market. They use the same threat tactics ("You'll lose your fellowship"), dire predictions ("Unions will devastate the unique student-professor relationship and wreck American higher education"), and delaying maneuvers. They hire the same law firms expert in obstructing unionization. Meanwhile, they exploit low-paid TAs and part-time instructors to teach an ever larger proportion of the total course load.

The crusade to block TA unions started soon after the Wisconsin success. Rulings by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in favor of Adelphi University in 1972 and Stanford in 1974 squelched TA unions at private universities for a quarter-century. These rulings set the precedent: teaching assistants are students, not employees who can unionize.

Even the union at Wisconsin had serious trouble. The agreement between the TAA and the university had no legal standing. In 1980, after several strikes, the university simply tore up the agreement, and the teaching assistants were back at square one. It took six years to reestablish a union. This time, they affiliated with the Wisconsin Federation of Teachers and bargained as state employees under the State Employment Labor Relations Act. The University of California (where Berkeley TAs fought sixteen years for a union contract) and other state schools have set up similar systems.

Private universities have used the difference between state labor laws (which govern state schools) and the National Labor Relations Act (which governs the private sector) to prove that TA unions won't work for them. Unlike state laws, they argue, the NLRA does not specify what are legitimate issues for collective bargaining. Therefore, TA unions could make demands that would undermine education quality. They could, for example, insist on multiple-choice exams, which take less time to grade. Yet the TAs claim they would agree to limit negotiations to standard workplace issues such as pay and insurance.

Everything changed last November when the NLRB toppled its 1972 and 1974 precedents and ruled against New York University and in favor of a new TA union. Teaching assistants, the board decided, can be both students and employees at the same institution.

NYU students have made history no less than the Wisconsin students in 1969. NYU was the test case for all private universities and should set off a wave of successful organizing.

I was a teaching assistant on the Madison campus in 1969, but over the years, I had almost forgotten the TAA. The antiwar marches up State Street and the national guardsmen with their unsheathed bayonets loomed much larger in my memory. Then last November, I was writing an article about the new union at NYU, and one of the students I interviewed explained why she found the administration's prophecy of educational decline absurd. "We have a long history of these unions, and they've worked out fine," she said. "There's been one at the University of Wisconsin, the TAA, since 1969."

Whatever the victories and defeats of the politics of the 1960s, the TAA success had legs.

JOANNE BARKAN

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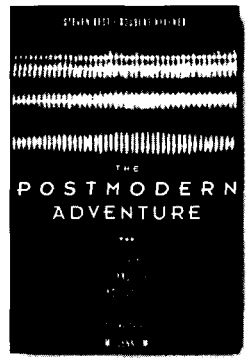

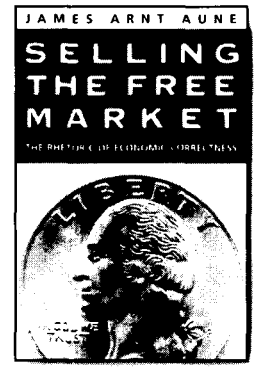

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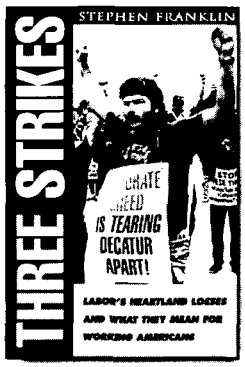

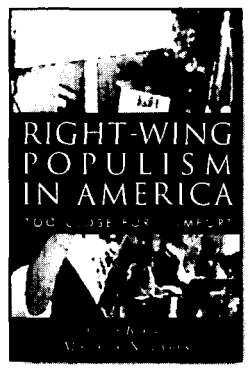

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